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REFLEXIONS

On the SOURCES of

INCREDULITY

With regard to

RELIGION.

By the Right Honourable DUNCAN FORBES of *Culloden*, late Lord Preſident of the Court of Seſſion in *Scotland*.

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REFLEXIONS

ON

INCREDULITY.

IT is raſh to affirm, that the univerſe, or even the ſolar ſyſtem, was made principally for the ſake of the earth, or of man; becauſe, for ought we know, there may be many more, and more conſiderable uſes for it. It is at the ſame time not certain, at leaſt to me it does not appear to be ſo, that there was any other uſe for creating theſe immenſe heavenly bodies, but to regulate the motion of the earth; to produce the other effects which ſome of them evidently have, and all of them in a greater or ſmaller proportion may have on the earth; and to raiſe in man that idea of the magnificence, power, and ſkill of the Creator, which the contemplation of the immenſity, motion, or-

der, beauty, and utility of theſe bodies muſt produce.

It is becauſe we know not whether thoſe bodies are inhabited, that we cannot pronounce, that the utility they bring us, is or is not the only end of creating them. If they are inhabited, the inhabitants muſt be of a texture very different from thoſe of the earth. But we cannot deem it impoſſible, that beings may have been made, fit to reſide, to act, and to think, in the very centre, as well as on the ſurface of the ſun.

But, without determining that queſtion, which the ſcantineſs of our lights will not permit us to decide; it is obvious, that, beſides the phyſical influence which theſe bodies may have on the earth, and on us, it muſt have been one, and that no inconſiderable end of the making them, to help man to ſuch an idea as has been mentioned of the Creator.

It is raſh to ſay, that any one part of the

the furniture of this earth is uſeleſs; that there is not ſome utility in the various ſoils and metals; or that the different plants, inſects, reptiles, fiſh, fowls, quadrupeds, are not neceſſary for certain purpoſes, though we have not yet diſcovered them. Who will deny uſefulneſs to poiſonous plants; or dare affirm that moths, rats, toads, vipers, and other vermin, have not been intended for proper and fit uſes? It is bold to aſſert, that the leaſt animalcule diſcovered by the microſcope, has not its proper uſe in nature.

It ſeems unreaſonable to ſay, that God framed all the ornament of this earth, to ſatisfy himſelf that he could do it; ſince he perfectly knew, that he could do every thing that does not involve contradiction.

But, as the whole frame of this earth, ſo far as we know it, and every plant and living creature that are ſupported by it, are, to man, ſtrict and very obvious demonſtrations of the power and wiſdom of the Creator; as the œconomy and diſ-

poſition of the whole is of his goodneſs; It ſeems reaſonable to conclude, that one, poſſibly the chief end of creating thoſe things, was, to ſhew God to man.

Most of the productions of the earth, are one way or another for the uſe of animals. Many animals are the food of other animals; and, to be ſure, ſo intended by the Maker. Man, as an animal, has his ſhare of the leguminous, as well as of animal food. Every living creature wants nouriſhment, and finds it ready provided; but all have not eyes to ſee the bountiful hand that reaches it. Man has his proviſion in common with the other animals; but then he has eyes that may, and, if he do not ſhut them, muſt ſee the hand from which it comes. On the brute therefore, who cannot know his benefactor, there is no obligation to duty or gratitude; on man, who may and ought to know, there is and muſt be. Why then may it not be fairly concluded, that one of the chief ends of crowding the earth with ſo many wonders of the vegeta-

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ble and animal kind, is, to fill the head of man with admiration, and his heart with gratitude?

It is raſh to ſay, that the bee knows, or makes uſe of any geometrical principles in the formation of its hexagonal cells; or that it is from any phyſical knowledge of the properties of flowers, that it is directed to cull the ſweets that yield its honey from ſome, neglecting others. It is raſh to affirm, that the various tribes of ſpiders conſider, and, from reflexion and by mechanical rules, frame thoſe nets of different forms and ſizes, that catch their vagrant prey. It is raſh to ſuppoſe, that the ſwallows, the crows, the magpies, frame their neſts, and make choice of that ſituation, from any antecedent reaſoning what is fitteſt to be done, or from any architectonical notions. It is neither reflexion nor hunger that moves the cat to lie in wait ſo patiently and ſo attentively for the mouſe or the rat. Theſe actions they exert, probably becauſe they are directed by their frame to

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exert them; and to that diſpoſition we give the name of *Inſtinct*.

It is falſe to ſay, that men deſire to eat and drink, from knowing that doing ſo is neceſſary to preſerve their lives; or that they have a deſire for the other ſex, from a deſign of propagating the ſpecies. Theſe diſpoſitions flow from their make: they hunger, they thirſt, they luſt, whether they would or would not. In theſe things, and ſome others, they are moved by their frame as brutes are.

But, laying aſide theſe natural, or rather mechanical diſpoſitions, man compared with brutes is much at a loſs, except in ſo far as Reaſon and reflexion come to his aſſiſtance. He has no inſtinct to determine him what to eat, what to avoid eating. It is but a ſmall part of the globe, if any, that can afford man fruits or legumens to ſupport him the whole year round. His make is not fit for catching animals to live on, were he naturally carnivorous. No Inſtinct ſuch as appears in other animals

mals, directs him to this or that ſort of habitation; and were he not directed by experience and reflexion, he muſt quickly periſh.

Man comes into the world much more helpleſs, and continues ſo much longer than any other animal we know. Without the care of his parents he muſt be ſoon loſt; and without the inſtruction which their experience enables them to afford his Reaſon, he muſt continue miſerable, until his own experience and obſervation yield matter for his Reaſon to work on. He therefore was evidently ſo framed, as to be obliged to follow Reaſon for his guide; whereas all the other animals had their guide in their texture and conſtitution.

No animal but man wants clothing, other than nature has provided for it. Man can hardly live in any part of the globe, unleſs he find clothing for himſelf.

No animal but Man ſtands in need of cookery,

cookery, or any other preparation for his food, but what it has from nature. Man muſt prepare every thing almoſt, except fruits and legumes, before they are fit for his ſervice. Grain muſt be ground and baked; all ſort of meat muſt be altered in its condition by fire; and I doubt ſalt muſt by induſtry be found or made, before the nouriſhment be proper for man.

No climate yields ſpontaneouſly food ſufficient for man, though all do for the brutes that inhabit them. Man does not cultivate the ground, nor find ſupplies for his wants, from inſtinct, but from obſervation and reaſoning.

Reason in him muſt anſwer the end of Inſtinct in brutes. He ſees trees and all vegetables ſpring from ſeeds; if he would have plenty, he muſt plant or ſow. He ſees grains and fruits fall and periſh, unleſs they are gathered and preſerved; and he ſees the ant induſtriouſly gathering and laying up ſtores. Theſe obſervations muſt lead him to produce and ſave corns, *&c.*

Cold

Cold makes clothing neceſſary; the ſpider's thread and web furniſh matter for his fancy, and ſpinning and weaving are invented. Floods, and ſtorms, and winter make ſhelter neceſſary. The ſwallow makes uſe of mortar, the crow of ſticks for its neſt: man's invention improves on their inſtinct; at firſt huts riſe, and at laſt palaces.

Instinct carries brutes no farther than to what is fit and neceſſary: Reaſon carries man ſo far; but then it, or at leaſt it prompted by vanity, carries him much farther. In place of warm clothing, which nature requires, vanity will have it rich and gaudy. The bluſh of the roſe, the plume of the peacock, and the ſhining wing of the butterfly, muſt be imitated to deck our fine Ladies, and our much finer young Gentlemen. In place of convenient manſions, we muſt have ſumptuous palaces, cruſted with marble, and ſhining with gold. In place of food fitted for our ſtomachs by roaſting and boiling, we run into the moſt ridiculous gratification of ex-

travagant taſte, by unnatural mixtures, that diſtreſs the ſtomach. And in place of uſing wine, and ſtrong drink, our own invention, for neceſſary purpoſes, if any ſuch there are, we make them the inſtruments of debauch, the means of debaſing our underſtanding, and deſtroying our health.

HAPPY brutes! unhappy man! Their inſtinct carries them to what is fit and convenient for them; but it carries them no farther; it leads them to nothing that undoes them. His Reaſon ſupplies in him the lack of inſtinct, and leads him to every thing that is neceſſary or convenient; nay, bounds him to that when duly made uſe of. His Reaſon, beſides ſupplying the place of inſtinct, was clearly intended for opening to him a ſcene of very delightful employment; the contemplation of the works of God, the reflexion on his boundleſs might, wiſdom, and goodneſs, and the enjoyment of his favour. But unluckily this laſt has long ceaſed to be any part of his buſineſs. His Reaſon is made uſe of indeed,

indeed, by all means, whether right or wrong, to purchaſe things neceſſary and convenient; but he does not ſtop there. He ſeldom ever makes uſe of it to prevent the abuſe of theſe conveniences: on the contrary, he employs it in contriving means to raiſe and to gratify unnatural appetites, by which his conſtitution is hurt. And he ſeems to have no other view in the conduct of his life, but to ſatisfy thoſe vitious and deſtructive inclinations, which he himſelf has raiſed, and ſubſtituted in the room of thoſe which Reaſon was intended to lead him to.

Brutes are by nature ſufficiently ſupplied with neceſſaries, and with Inſtinct to teach them to make uſe of them; and if they had eyes to ſee the Author of nature, they ſurely would be thankful. Man is richly ſupplied by nature; and, in place of Inſtinct, has Reaſon to teach him to apply to his uſe and convenience what nature has produced. He has beſides eyes to ſee the Author of nature, and of his bleſſings, the giver of that Reaſon that

helps him to turn the product of the earth to his account; and he has in his make a diſpoſition to gratitude, as well as he knows, that acknowledgment, thankfulneſs, and compliance with the will of his Maker and Benefactor, is his duty. But, alas! how ſeldom does he ſuffer that diſpoſition to be brought by Reaſon to act? How little is he employed in thinking on nature, with a view to diſcover and admire its Author? and how ſmall is his concern for the will, for the honour of that Being by whoſe power and bounty he ſubſiſts?

Because he can raiſe plants, and gather fruits and ſeeds; becauſe he can convert theſe ſeeds and fruits into bread and wine; becauſe he can manufacture ſilk, wool, and flax; becauſe he can ſmelt minerals, and produce a ſort of new ſpecies of metals; and becauſe he can, by making uſe of his Reaſon, procure a vaſt variety of gratifications to his taſte, and to his vanity, he forgets the Being whoſe gift that reaſon was: he is apt to look upon himſelf as the creator of all thoſe things that afford

ford him ſubſiſtence or gratification, and on them as his creatures: he thinks it lawful to make uſe of his own to any exceſs: and he at laſt drops into an opinion, that true felicity conſiſts in the gratification of all appetites, at any expence, without regard to right or wrong; and that every thing that may ſafely be done to compaſs that gratification, is lawful.

When this comes to be the ſettled diſpoſition of the mind; when the bias of the heart is the gratification of all luſts and appetites; when the gratification of theſe luſts and appetites is directly adverſary to what right Reaſon ſays is the will of God, and inconſiſtent with what it ſays would have been our chief felicity, even in this life, had we purſued it; no one can wonder, that right reaſon is not conſulted, or its voice liſtened unto; or that the crowd, eſpecially of the giddy and vitious, ſhun all correſpondence with Reaſon, all ſort of meditation; and in place thereof, when they are ſatiated with the gratification of groſſer appetites for the time,

time, and cannot proceed farther in the enjoyment, they take up with play, or other the moſt ſilly, if not offenſive amuſements, rather than be left alone in the hands of their own conſcience and reflexions.

Thus has Reaſon, the higheſt gift that God has been pleaſed to beſtow on men, by the perverſity of fooliſh guilty man become the inſtrument of his miſery. Reaſon was given him, in place of inſtinct, to direct his choice; which was left free, that he might deſerve, and be rewarded for doing well: Reaſon was given, to guard him againſt the prevalence of luſts and appetites, and to lead him to the chief felicity his nature was capable of: Reaſon was given, to let him ſee the order, the beauty, and the magnificence of the works of God; and thereby to diſcover the excellency, the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of that ſelf-exiſtent Being: Reaſon was given, to ſhew him his immediate dependence on his Creator for every bleſſing he enjoyed, as well as the capacity of enjoying them; and to fill his ſoul with gratitude for the over-

overflowing bounty of his Maker: And Reaſon was given him, to complete and ſecure his felicity, by a ſettled confidence in the favour and protection of the Almighty, ſo long as he made uſe of it to controul and correct diſorderly appetites; and to anſwer the end of his creation, in admiring, reverencing, and adoring that ſource of perfection, mercy, and goodneſs. But, alas! to what miſerable purpoſes has wretched man employed this mighty boon of heaven! Reaſon, in place of reſtraining, has been made uſe of to encourage luſts and appetites, by inventing incentives to them: In place of leading men to ſee their duty, and the true object of their felicity, it has been employed in contriving means to divert the attention from looking at either: Nay, in place of diſcovering the boundleſs perfections of God, the abſolute dependence of man, and the neceſſary connexion between right and wrong and rewards and puniſhments, it has been fatally made uſe of to hide the Deity from the ſight of men, to erect man into an independent being,

being, to aboliſh all hopes and fears of rewards or puniſhments, and to make felicity conſiſt in what is truly the diſhonour of the human nature.

AMAZING as this phænomenon is, nothing is more certainly true; nor has any effect in nature a more ſhameful, a more pitiful cauſe.

APPETITES were given to man, to prompt him to preſerve himſelf, and to continue the ſpecies. The natural calls to eat, to drink, to propagate the ſpecies, were neceſſary; elſe man employed in contemplation, would ſoon have ceaſed to be. The acts of eating, drinking, copulating, without the natural ſtimulus, have nothing inviting in them. And it is an inſtance of the benignity of the Creator, that the gratification of thoſe neceſſary appetites is attended with a very ſenſible pleaſure, which rewards the obeying of nature's call; as it is an inſtance of his wiſdom, that when the ends of theſe natural calls are anſwered, ſatiety enſues,

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and the objects coveted loſe their charm, and cannot be ſo much as thought of with any reliſh, until nature has farther occaſion for them.

The deſire of knowledge, the effect of diſcerning and reaſoning, was implanted to prompt man to employ thoſe faculties by which the Deity, and what is owing to him; might be diſcovered. And here again the goodneſs of the Divine Being is manifeſt, in annexing to the gratification of that deſire the calmeſt and moſt laſting ſatisfaction, without that alloy which attends the gratification of their other, carnal, appetites; and with this ſingularity, that the deſire of knowledge is inſatiable, and, like its object, infinite; rewarding nevertheleſs the ſeeker after knowledge with very ſenſible pleaſure in every ſtep of his purſuit.

The deſire of preſerving life, (not to ſpeak of the natural impulſe to avoid ill), is the reſult of the pleaſures and enjoy-

ments of both kinds provided for man in this life.

And the desire of approbation, is the incentive planted in man by his Maker, to dispose him to do his duty; which is immediately rewarded by the calm satisfaction that warms his heart upon having done it. The approbation of the Author and Maker of all things, must be of infinite consequence to the creature; and the consciousness of having gained that approbation, must yield the purest joy.

The other dispositions, or what are called passions of the mind, such as, anger, fear, love, hatred, *&c.* have been placed in man for noble, and for salutary ends; not only as they respect man's duty to the Deity, but as they regard society: though those also, as man has unhappily contrived the matter, in place of promoting the ends for which they were meant, hurry man on to misery, and give birth to many disorders in society.

Now,

Now, thus qualified for happineſs, what has man done to enjoy, or to preſerve it? Why, truly, finding an immediate pleaſure attendant upon the gratification of ſenſual appetites, he is diſpoſed to place his happineſs in them: Finding that pains and induſtry muſt be uſed to ſupply what his appetites crave, he beſtows all his time and action in that purſuit: Finding that, employing his Reaſon, he can refine upon the common gratification of thoſe appetites, by inventing new meats, new drinks, new ſauces; by procuring variety of women; by erecting palaces; by picture; by ſculpture; by muſick; and by numberleſs arts, to pleaſe and to amuſe, his Reaſon is made uſe of to thoſe purpoſes only: And finding that, by the uſe of Reaſon, he can not only arrive at thoſe things, but that, though he is far from being the ſtrongeſt of animals, he, by employing it, is more powerful than they are all put together; that he is their lord and maſter, and they ſubſervient to his uſes; that he can blow up rocks, alter the courſe of rivers, lock up the ſea in baſons, join, in a

manner, diſtant continents by ſhips; that he can imitate thunder, and lay whole countries waſte; and that thoſe things he can do without any immediate controul or check from the Author of nature; he is apt to think he owes all theſe advantages and prerogatives to himſelf, and to that Reaſon which diſtinguiſhes him from the reſt of the viſible creation; and, on that ſuppoſal, to conclude, that no Return of duty or gratitude is due to that ſuperior Being, from whom his Reaſon and all his real enjoyments flow.

As the firm belief of this concluſion is abſolutely neceſſary towards quieting his mind, in the career of brutal folly in which he is engaged, Reaſon, that unfortunate tool, is made uſe of on every occaſion to blind its owner. It was given by the Creator to be his guide; and it ought to be ſo: if duly made uſe of and attended to, it would be ſo. But, as man has contrived to manage matters, it is liſtened to only when it ſuggeſts what is fit to ſooth him in his fooliſh ſhameful courſes. On ſuch

ſuch occaſions it is the ſole and ſovereign rule. But if it preſumes to check him; if it inſinuates, that he is no more than a poor dependent creature, debtor to the ſupreme Being, and conſequently accountable for every talent, every bleſſing, every enjoyment; that ſuggeſtion is ſtraightway treated as the offspring, not of manly Reaſon, but of mean daſtardly fear; a melancholy conceit, nurſed up in ſickly imaginations; which had its origin in certain inventions of cunning lawgivers, who, to keep their people in order, and in obedience to the laws eſtabliſhed by them, publiſhed notions of right and wrong, and of rewards and puniſhments, which, conveyed down by tradition, have gained credit with the weak, to the great diſturbance of their quiet, and paſs for realities with enthuſiaſts. Unhappy man! Fatal effect of prejudice: Reaſon, the ſovereign rule, is to be followed, and allowed that name, or rejected, and called the fruit of melancholy or enthuſiaſm, as it does or does not conform itſelf to prejudices.

But what is the moſt amazing on this article is, that in proportion as men are, or imagine they are poſſeſſed of knowledge, and of the art of reaſoning, in an eminent degree, their abuſe of that knowledge, and of the reaſoning faculty, to the prejudice of the end to which it was chiefly meant, is the more conſpicuous. In antient times, which are now called times of ignorance, when men did not pique themſelves on the deep knowledge, and the profound ſkill in reaſoning, which we boaſt of at this time, there was a general diſpoſition to reverence the Creator, and a profeſſed infidel was hardly to be met with. But, in theſe our days of ſuppoſed knowledge, the guiſe is ſadly changed. Except amongſt thoſe called ignorant, not many are to be found that do, or pretend to believe in God.

From the beginning, a rational being, unaided by learning, and the experience of former ages, could eaſily diſcern the hand of an intelligent, wiſe, powerful, and very bountiful Creator, in the whole

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and in every part of the fabrick of this ſyſtem that fell under his ken; and could as eaſily diſcover his own obligations to, and his dependence on that Being. And accordingly we ſee, by the earlieſt accounts of time that have come to our hands, all mankind, full of a perſuaſion of their dependence, full of reverence to the Deity, ſoliciting his favour and protection by prayer, by ceremonies, by ſacrifices, ſometimes human, nay of their firſt-born; and imputing all their favourable or croſs incidents that happened to them, to the good-will or diſpleaſure of the ſovereign Being, whom it was their chief ſtudy to placate.

It is true, that the notions they generally entertained of the Deity were imperfect, as well as their manner of ſerving him corrupted; circumſtances that can eaſily be accounted for from the weakneſs and perverſeneſs of thoſe who took the lead in directing their religious opinions and practices. But ſtill it is undeniably true, that the groſs of mankind were ſerious

rious in their belief of the exiſtence of a Deity, of their dependence on him, and of the occaſion they had for his protection and favour.

To this general diſpoſition of mankind it was in part owing, that the goſpel, upon its firſt publication, made ſo rapid and ſo ſurpriſing progreſs. No man at that time doubted of the exiſtence of a Deity, or of man's dependence on him. It was eaſy to ſatisfy every one who admitted theſe propoſitions, that mankind, by the corruption into which they had fallen, ſtood mightily in need of ſome interceſſor, ſome mean by which they might be ſaved from the weight of their ſins. And it is no marvel, that evidence given to men ſo convinced, that ſalvation might be had through Jesus, ſhould be received with gladneſs.

And accordingly we ſee, that, in a trifle of time, the herd of mankind, in defiance of all diſcouragements, and of the moſt ſevere perſecutions, from power, greedily embraced

embraced and profeſſed this faith; and continued ſtedfaſtly in the profeſſion of it, notwithſtanding the monſtrous abſurdities with which the teachers of that faith loaded it, and the more monſtrous and ſhocking lives and manners of the teachers; until of late years, that what ought to have been improved into a bleſſing to mankind, has unfortunately turned out to their deſtruction.

In the period juſt mentioned, wicked and voluptuous men purſued wicked and voluptuous courſes; and many groſs villanies and abuſes were daily committed by profligate men, which the degenerate condition of mankind produced. But ſtill theſe wickedneſſes were diſguiſed, diſowned, or ſome how ſought to be atoned for. The villain diſſembled at leaſt, and was forced to be ſo mean as to become a hypocrite. No man dreamed of profeſſing openly, that he denied the being of a God, or his dependence on, and being accountable to him. And if any one was indeed ſo fooliſh, as well as impious, as to enter-

tain ſuch a notion, (which by the by is with me a queſtion), there was no temptation for uttering it; becauſe there was no chance that any one ſhould concur in ſupporting ſuch an opinion.

But of late the caſe is ſurpriſingly, and ſadly altered, by the very mean that ought to have produced the contrary effect; increaſe in knowledge, from the more careful obſervation of nature, and from the peruſal of the works of the learned in all ages.

Whatever degree of acquiſition of knowledge from experience, the longevity of the antediluvians might have rendered practicable for any particular perſon, it is certain, that the ſhort period to which mens lives are now, and have for ſome thouſands of years been limited, does not permit any individual to lay in any conſiderable ſtock of knowledge. And if he will know much, he muſt profit of others, his contemporaries; or of thoſe

thoſe that went before him, by tradition, or by writing.

Hence all arts have been perfected by degrees. The experience of one age adds to that of another. And if the diſcoveries of our forefathers had not been handed down to us by writing or tradition, we ſhould be as rude and unlearned as the moſt barbarous of them were.

After writing became faſhionable among the antients, the experience, the reaſoning, and diſcoveries of one age, were tranſmitted to, and improved on by the next. The inquiſitive became diligent in peruſing the diſcoveries of former times: philoſophy became mightily in vogue; and it was no uncommon thing for men of parts, to dedicate their whole time to the contemplation of nature, and to place their whole felicity in employing all their mental faculties in the inveſtigation of truth.

As purſuits of this kind are of all others

the moſt noble, and the moſt ſuited to a rational being, they ſoon became the moſt honourable. Philoſophers were held to be *wiſe men*, and were called ſo *tout court*; as undoubtedly they held themſelves to be, though modeſtly they contented themſelves with the appellation of *lovers of wiſdom* only; and the vanity they had in being very much more knowing than other people, and in being thought by others *wiſe*, was the chief reward they had for their labour, and contributed not a little to run them into the vain opinion, that they were in very deed *wiſe*, and that their ſkill and wiſdom could anſwer all purpoſes.

In all arts and ſciences, ſo far as the obſervations they were poſſeſſed of afforded materials, they reaſoned accurately. In morality, and the whole ſyſtem of duties which men owe reciprocally to each other, and which members owe to the ſociety whereof they are part, they acquitted themſelves well. Brutal appetites and enjoyments they ſaw, and reproached the meanneſs of; the ſuperior happineſs which the

the right exercise of the understanding yields, they felt and recommended. Reason, in contradistinction to appetites and passions, was their sovereign guide; and felicity was to be attained by following its dictates. Social and publick virtues had, according to their notions, charms sufficient to make the possessor of them happy, and to secure against all wants, pains, and distresses.

But though their sagacity and attention discovered and described the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; though they defined with precision the limits of social and political duty; and though it was the labour of their lives, to recommend what was good, and to dissuade from what was evil: yet it unluckily so happened, that the learning and reason which they valued themselves upon, never once led them to the reflexions for which they were principally intended, on the excellencies and manifest attributes of the Author of the creation, on the necessary dependence of man upon his favour, and on the

the duty thence reſulting to the Deity. Such reflexions would have been fit to humble their vanity, and to have checked them in the courſe of purſuits, which though not openly vitious, yet had nothing of that reverence and attention that is due to the Deity mixed with them.

So ſoon as theſe wiſe philoſophers had got that quantity of knowledge which in their apprehenſions placed them above other men, and had got into a high opinion of their own Reaſon; they no longer employed their parts in attending to and inveſtigating the wondrous effects of wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, diſplayed in the fabrick of this univerſe, in order to raiſe high and honourable ideas of the Almighty, and becoming notions of man's meanneſs, ſhort-ſightedneſs, and dependence: but, rejecting ſuch poor-ſpirited reflexions, they took it in their heads to imagine, that the profuſion of wonders in the works of creation was intended only for an exerciſe to their underſtanding, to diſcover how, by what mechaniſm, and

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for what ends ſuch things were brought about. They found out they had not power ſufficient to produce them; but on the all-ſufficiency of their Reaſon they depended: and therefore to work they went, to diſcover, and to explain nature. Hence ſo many *coſmogonia's*, ſo many ſyſtems for ſhewing how the various *phænomena* are performed. Some ſet out on *hypotheſes* which time has diſcovered to be abſolutely falſe. Some gave only words, which had no certain meaning, and therefore explained nothing; but which the philoſopher and his followers were perfectly ſatisfied with. And all of them agreed in this, that their Reaſon was a match for the undertaking; that is, fit to inveſtigate and deſcribe all the myſteries of nature, and to diſcover and determine all the ways and works of God.

With this prepoſſeſſion in behalf of the powers of their Reaſon, theſe wiſe Gentlemen undertook to inquire into the nature of God; laying it down as a fixed point, to admit no quality in that Being that

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their Reaſon did not aſſign him; nor to allow any action to him, but what they, making uſe of their Reaſon and obſervation, could aſſign the cauſe and end of.

On theſe articles the difference of opinion was great. Some held the world to be eternal; and the infinite variety and contrivance, to be the effect of *Nature*, eternal alſo: and with this ſound, in place of ſenſe, they were ſatisfied. Some held the world to be the work of an intelligent Being: but the number of them was few; and what regard he had to men in the compoſition, they did not ſay. Some held that the Deity directed events in this world, particularly thoſe that regarded nations and ſocieties: others utterly denied Providence; and imagined, that every thing was left to the government of Chance. Few philoſophers allowed of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: thoſe that did, thought only of rewarding publick virtues, and puniſhing vices noxious to ſociety. None of them imagi-

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ned, that God ever minded the inward diſpoſition, or heart of man.

As *Epicurus* and his followers obſerved, that no ſignal puniſhment attended vice in this world, they denied Providence; as they could not be ſatisfied that the dead could riſe, they denied a future ſtate; and as there was no puniſhment that actually attended vitious actions in this world or another, all actions with them were indifferent. So that this ſect, which was numerous, diſcarded the Deity, and made brutes of men.

But it is impoſſible they could have dropt into ſuch monſtrous abſurdities, if the vain voluptuous courſe in which they were engaged, had not given a bias to their Reaſon; and if they had not made Reaſon ſo much the teſt and touchſtone of all things, as to reject every thing which it could frame any objection to, if it could not alſo, by its own light, diſſolve that objection.

Had they duly attended to the popular opinions which prevailed in their days, that the gods regarded the actions of men; that good actions were pleaſing, and evil diſpleaſing to the Deity; that ſins, unleſs expiated, were to be puniſhed; and that rewards and puniſhments were to be met with in another ſtate: had they with care conſidered the eſſential difference between good and evil actions; the monſtrous abſurdity which attends the ſuppoſal, that wickedneſs can go unpuniſhed, or virtue unrewarded; and the neceſſary conſequence from thence, that there muſt be another time for thoſe rewards and puniſhments, as they do not happen in this life: and had they permitted themſelves to ſee, without prejudice, the numberleſs obligations, unacknowledged and unreturned, under which man lies to his Creator and Preſerver, and the infinite diſproportion there is between our weak ſcanty Reaſon and his boundleſs wiſdom, it is impoſſible they could have fallen into a ſet of ſuch childiſh opinions as they maintained.

But they were too much bewitched with the chimerical notions they had of their own excellency; too fond of the character they had carved out for themſelves, after driving the Deity from their thoughts, of being lords of the creation, the chief of beings, accountable to none, happy in themſelves, intitled to gratify every appetite, and ſubject to no law but that of their own good-will and pleaſure, to ſubmit to the mortification that muſt reſult from the diſcovery of their real ſtate. The miſery into which folly had plunged human nature, muſt be a diſagreeable object of contemplation to a vain man who had got himſelf into poſſeſſion of the ſeat of God. The neceſſity of humiliation, repentance, amendment, interceſſion, and of a total alteration of views and purſuits, was a pill of no eaſy digeſtion. And therefore it is no great wonder, that though, on the firſt publication of the goſpel, the good tidings were greedily received by the unlearned, and conſequently leſs prejudiced, the philoſophers, and their ſcholars, the pretended

learned men of the world, reſiſted it with the greateſt warmth and bitterneſs.

It was however lucky, that though the infidelity of the antient philoſophers was almoſt as ſtrong as that of the modern, it was by much leſs extenſive; and therefore leſs miſchievous. Learning in thoſe days was confined to a few heads; books were ſcarce, and the purchaſe of them coſt a great deal of money: every body did not meddle with philoſophiſing, as they do at preſent; and, of conſequence, knowledge of the philoſophical kind was only to be met with amongſt philoſophers who taught, and ſuch of their hearers as had leiſure, genius, and books, to enable them to proſecute their ſtudies. The herd of the people remained ignorant and undebauched; and the Chriſtian doctrine, which took root amongſt them, when it called in unprejudiced reaſon, and learning, to aſſiſt it, proved at laſt too ſtrong for the few fantaſtick proud philoſophers.

THUS was infidelity, that is, in theory and opinion, baniſhed from the Chriſtian world, till of late, that a falſe opinion has prevailed, that with the reſtoration of learning, the knowledge of mankind has enlarged itſelf infinitely; that this is the effect of genius and Reaſon; and that making a proper uſe of this Reaſon, every thing that is, or appears to be myſterious in nature, may to a certainty, at leaſt to a very high degree of probability, be diſcovered. And this falſe opinion has unfortunately become ſo prevalent and extenſive, that, except amongſt the meaner and the leſs conceited part of mankind, it is not eaſy to meet with any one that is not tainted with it.

THIS miſchief is however by no means to be charged upon learning, but on the weakneſs and prejudices of mankind; who, conceiving too high an opinion of the powers of their own underſtanding, preſume to meaſure every thing, divine as well as human, by it. For when firſt the ſubverſion of the *Greek* empire drove learned men,

men, with their books, into the Weſt, which fell in with the time of the invention of printing, whereby knowledge was circulated, and could be come at much cheaper, and with leſs labour, than formerly, great numbers of men of genius applied themſelves to ſtudy, and in a trifle of time acquired ſo much knowledge, as diſpoſed them to throw off the yoke, as well as the abſurdities of the church of *Rome;* which would have had a thorough effect, but for the paſſions and intereſts of ſelfiſh princes. But in this attack on the reigning church, infidelity had no ſort of hand. Learning had warmed the piety, as well as it improved the knowledge of the Reformers: a thorough examination of the ſcriptures, of hiſtory, and of antiquity, independent of the tradition of the church, ſecured and defined their faith: and piety in thoſe days was the companion of knowledge and learning; as it muſt ever continue to be where knowledge and learning are lodged in ſober minds.

The quick and eaſy conveyance of knowledge

ledge by the preſs, ſoon produced in all ſoils ſwarms of men of real or pretended learning. Curioſity, genius, or the faſhion, (for it was the mode then to ſtudy), filled *Europe* with men of letters. Sciences of all ſorts were purſued by people of all countries, as their taſtes ſeverally led them; all the antient learning was expoſed to view; in theology, the progreſs juſt aſcribed was made; the *Roman* law was ſtudied, and taught with great accuracy; the *Greek* and *Roman* oratory and poetry became the ſtandards of performances of that kind; the *Greek*, particularly *Ariſtotle*'s philoſophy, reigned in the ſchools; *Hippocrates*, *Galen*, *Celſus*, *&c.* gave lights to phyſicians which they had not before; and the works of the antient aſtronomers and mathematicians which remain, revived thoſe ſtudies; in which, by the aſſiduous application of ingenious men, very great progreſs has been made.

It muſt be owned, that, in almoſt every branch of learning, knowledge has been carried to a higher pitch, ſince the revival

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val of learning, than it appears to have been by the antients, from the remains of their works that have come to our hands. But that is not to be aſcribed to the ſuperiority of genius of the moderns; ſince the true cauſe of it can eaſily be aſſigned, *i. e.* That multitudes are at work on the ſame ſubject; and that the preſs affords ſo quick a conveyance of their conceptions and obſervations to each other, that they are thereby vaſtly aided in their lucubrations. Beſides that many accidental diſcoveries by men not always of the brighteſt parts, have given hints, and ſtruck out lights to the ingenious, which have led to conſiderable improvements, and have baniſhed many falſe ſyſtems.

ACCIDENT gave birth to the invention of teleſcopes, and of microſcopes; and yet to the firſt is owing the confirmation of the *Copernican*, and the ruin of the *Ptolomean* ſyſtem; and to the ſecond, the confirmation of Dr. *Hervey*'s diſcovery of the circulation of the blood, as well as the production to view of numberleſs tribes of animals,

mals, hitherto hid from mortal ſight. Accident gave birth to the invention of gunpowder, and of the air-pump; and experiments made on theſe have diſcloſed many unknown properties of the air. Experiments to which men have been led by accidents, have made ſurpriſing diſcoveries in chymy, and many parts of natural philoſophy, to the great improvement of phyſick, and other branches of uſeful knowledge. And the accidental diſcovery of the *Weſt-Indies*, and the intercourſe by trade with it, and with the *Eaſt-Indies*, have brought numbers of particulars to light, to which the antients were utter ſtrangers.

Possessed of the learning of the antients, with the vaſt addition of later diſcoveries, it is not to be wondered at, if the moderns exceeded the antients as much in vanity, and the good opinion they entertained of their own capacity, as they did in knowledge. Hence they employed, with great induſtry, their time and their ta in ſearches after the ſecrets of natur

in diſcovering and aſſigning the phyſical cauſes of the effects that ſhine forth in the univerſe. *Deſcartes*'s new *Coſmogonia* beat *Ariſtotle*'s, and all the other antient ſyſtems, out of the ſchools. The artifice employed by the Creator, in the formation of the univerſe, in the direction, and the preſervation of it, was deſcribed, and laid open to the comprehenſion of the meaneſt capacity; the phyſical cauſes of the ebbing and flowing of the ſea, of magnetiſm, of the formation of metals, and of all the other ſeeming myſteries of nature, were aſſigned; and, to the conviction of the inventers, and of almoſt all *Europe*, for about half a century, nothing was wanted but the application of his principles, to account for every *phænomenon*, how ſurpriſing ſoever, that ſhould at any time make its appearance.

Whilst the world was drunk with this conceit, no marvel they ſhould entertain a very high opinion of the ſagacity of

If his power was not to be com-

with that of the Omnipotent, yet

his

his wiſdom and knowledge did not ſeem to fall far ſhort of that of the Omniſcient. A well-inſtructed and well-convinced *Carteſian* would not think himſelf hard put to it by the queſtions about the formation of natural things which the Almighty put to *Job*, to humble his pride, and to convince him, that he was not a competent judge of the ways and views of God. And thence it naturally followed, that they looked down, with ſome contempt, upon ſuch parts of the ſcripture as appeared to them unphiloſophical, entertained a poor opinion of the writers of them, and laughed at the ſimplicity of ſerious Chriſtians, who believed ſeveral articles, in matters of religion, which thoſe wiſe men could not account for ſo well, as they could for the formation of the univerſe, and the various *phænomena* of nature.

To this way of thinking their maſter's firſt principle led them. *Quicquid clarè & diſtinctè percipio, eſt verum,* was the foundation on which he built; and a good one. He ſurely run no riſk in admitting

whatever was founded on it. In all the parts of mathematicks, in which he excelled, the converting the propoſition, and admitting nothing to be true but what one clearly perceives to be ſo, is the rule which has guided ſuch as followed it to that degree of certainty which has diſtinguiſhed thoſe ſciences from all others. The object of them admits of the application of the rule. Lines, angles, numbers, the creatures of man's imagination, defined by him, and receiving their nature from that definition, he may clearly conceive all the properties of; and is in the right to deny to any line, angle, or number, what he does not clearly perceive to belong to it. But if he carries this rule to other ſciences, where the diſcovery of truth depends upon a different ſpecies of evidence: if he applies it to the works or ways of the Moſt High, which his knowledge does not reach to, as it does to the properties of lines and numbers, beings of his own creation; and of which he cannot poſſibly know any thing but what he gathers from conjecture,

ſture, founded on the appearances in nature, or from what the Deity may have been pleaſed to reveal; monſtrous miſtakes may, and muſt grow. A thouſand improbable, nay almoſt inconceivable things, in natural philoſophy, are true. The teſtimony of the ſenſes confutes all objections from improbability, or inconceivability, if one may uſe the expreſſion; and credible evidence ſhort of that of ſeeing or feeling, from unſuſpected witneſſes, creates that certainty on which men may ſafely depend and act. And if it has pleaſed the Almighty to diſcover to mankind any thing relating to himſelf or to his ways, it is but of little conſequence, whether that falls in with the philoſophers notions or conceptions; and the only ſenſible queſtion can be, Whether there is ſufficient evidence that in fact ſuch things were revealed?

NOTWITHSTANDING theſe obvious reflexions, Monſ. *Deſcartes* and his followers, and the other ſects of philoſophers who have ſucceeded him, not content with world-

world-making, have proceeded to god-making. They have preſumed to define him, his attributes and powers; nay, they have determined what he is and muſt be, and what he is not and cannot be, with ſuch preciſion and certainty, that if any thing ſaid to be revealed by himſelf, does not conform directly to the character and qualities they have given this god, they ſtraightway conteſt, and, right or wrong, reject the evidence for ſuch revelation.

DESCARTES's romance kept entire poſſeſſion of mens belief for full fifty years. If ſome croſs experiment ſhocked it in ſome particular, the ſyſtem was pieced up and mended by his followers, and accommodated to the new-diſcovered *phænomena*; till at laſt the tide of contrary obſervations and experiments was too ſtrong to be reſiſted. All the invention of his countrymen the *French*, could not prop the theory that experiment demonſtrated to be falſe: and what was worſt of all for *France*, it was cruſhed under

under the weight of another theory, built on the diſcoveries of Sir *Iſaac Newton*, an *Engliſhman*.

THE ſagacity of Sir *Iſaac* was admired by all, and adored by his countrymen. His genius puſhed him to diſcoveries in the moſt abſtruſe parts of the mathematicks, that have cauſed the aſtoniſhment of the learned; and at the ſame time, from accurate obſervations made on nature, he has given hints, which, though by him flung out in the form of queries only, his countrymen have converted into ſo many certain propoſitions; and upon them have founded what they pretend to be a compleat theory or ſyſtem, which future experiments and diſcovery muſt try the ſolidity of. But it muſt be owned Sir *Iſaac*'s modeſty was much greater than that of his followers, not only in the title he gave to his notions, but in the reſpect with which, notwithſtanding his vaſt genius and ſuperior knowledge, he treated the Deity and the ſcriptures.

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It is truly amazing, that the ſeries of blunders which the moſt exalted geniuſes who applied themſelves to ſyſtem-making have by late diſcoveries been found to have dropt into one after another, has not cured the philoſophers of our time of the high conceit they have entertained of the compaſs and all-ſufficiency of the human underſtanding, and of the madneſs of the undertaking, to trace, with the organs which we have got, the hidden wonders of the material creation; eſpecially ſince the more light we gain into natural things by accidental diſcoveries, the thicker the difficulties pour themſelves on us, and the more inexplicable theſe myſteries appear to be.

About the beginning of the laſt century, natural philoſophers had nothing to exerciſe their talents on, but ſuch *phænomena* as fell within their ſenſes, unaided by inſtruments, and ſuch obſervations as were without very great care or accuracy made accidentally on ſuch things as gave ſurpriſe on account of their ſingularity,

gularity. But ſince that time, the microſcope has unveiled a ſort of new creation, at leaſt a very remarkable part of it, till then unknown; the teleſcope has diſcovered new worlds in the ſkies; and improvements in mathematicks and aſtronomy, have ſhewed the ſize and diſtance of thoſe worlds. The inconceivable minuteneſs of the microſcopick animals, of the parts whereof they are compoſed, of their juices and nutriment, and the delicacy of the artifice that has produced and ſupports them, ſtrikes the mind with as ſtrong a ſenſe of the plenitude of ſkill and power of the Creator, as the grandeur and magnificence of the new diſcoveries in the ſkies does of his immenſity; and both are equally fit to give to man the moſt humbling view of his own knowledge and penetration, as well as of his power, when compared with thoſe of the Almighty.

The air-pump, experiments made therein, and others to which theſe gave riſe, have diſcovered many properties of the

air, heretofore unknown, which ſhew the admirable ſagacity of that Being by whoſe aſtoniſhing contrivance that fluid is ſo adjuſted and tempered, as in effect to ſupport the animal as well as the vegetable world, and to maintain this part of the creation in the condition in which it is.

Chymy purſued with attention, has diſcovered many effects of fire, and of mixtures, and general properties in metals, minerals, and other bodies, that give daily ſurpriſe; Anatomy has to a certain pitch laid open the aſtoniſhing artifice of the Creator, in the texture of the body of man, as well as of other animals; a priſm in Sir *Iſaac Newton*'s hand has diſcloſed many qualities in light, which never had entered into the heart of man to think of; and ſome accidental experiments in Electricity have preſented to the ſenſes, appearances which ſhew, that there are ſome powers and properties in matter not hitherto dreamed of, and which no theory as yet hatched can account for.

THE natural effect of thoſe diſcoveries upon minds rightly diſpoſed, ought to be, to mortify ſelf-conceit, and to exalt our idea of the infinite power and perfection of the Creator; ſince the greater progreſs we make in diſcovering, the more wonders of contrivance, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs we meet with, which though our Reaſon can ſometimes ſee the end of, it is too ſcanty to trace the mechanical cauſe of; and for that muſt reſort to the will and pleaſure of the Deity, unleſs we will be ſo abſurd as to ſay, that nature, without any meaning or contrivance, has beſtowed thoſe properties and powers upon certain parcels of matter.

THAT denſe bodies gravitate in proportion to their maſs, and that projected bodies continue in motion until obſtructed, are appearances ſo common, that no one is ſurpriſed with the obſervation; and the crowd do not trouble their head in inquiring after the cauſes. But it is not ſo with the clear-ſighted philoſophers. They muſt puzzle their brains with aſſigning the

mechanical cauſes for thoſe effects; and when they have done their beſt, they muſt confeſs their ignorance, or riſk error, by averring that there is no mechanical cauſe; and that the effect depends on a law of nature, which thoſe who are diſpoſed to be civil to the Deity ſay, flows from the mere will of the Deity.

In the ſame way, every man living is ſenſible of the intimate connexion between the ſoul and the body; he feels the ſenſation raiſed in the one by the action of the other, and knows the ready obedience which ſuch parts of the body as are intended for action yield to the will of the ſoul: but how the one acts upon the other, is not only not known, but, one may venture to ſay, not knowable or conceivable by us, until we acquire ſome degree of knowledge of what we are at preſent mere ſtrangers to, the nature of *Soul*, and the nature of *Body*.

A body fit to reflect light and colours, when placed in light, not only returns the rays

rays of light that fall upon it, to the luminous body that enlightened it, but ſends the picture of itſelf quite round the hemiſphere in all directions, and to every point: placing a thouſand, a million of ſuch bodies near one another, each performs the ſame operation; the rays of light and colours come inſtantaniouſly to the ſpectator's eye from each, without being diſturbed or diverted in the paſſage by the numberleſs rays returned, in different and contrary directions, by the other contiguous bodies. That the Being who contrived this mechaniſm, and created the machine, can explain it, and can give us capacity to comprehend it, is not to be doubted; but until it ſhall be his good pleaſure to do ſo, all we have to do is, to admire his power and ſkill, and thankfully to acknowledge the bleſſing he has beſtowed upon us by this aſtoniſhing machinery.

Why then, what has man got by the numerous experiments and diſcoveries of later years? Why, ſurely, a more accurate

rate and certain knowledge of many *phæ-nomena* of nature, of many of the works of God, than the antients had, and a more diſtinct view of the ends and uſes of many pieces and parts of the creation than men were formerly poſſeſſed of: diſcoveries fit to raiſe the moſt high and honourable notions of the Creator, and of his goodneſs to his creatures; and to convince man of his ſhort-ſightedneſs, dependence, and duty.

But has man made this improvement of thoſe diſcoveries? Nothing leſs! He makes a pompous muſter to his own vain mind of his knowledge; he looks upon it as his property, acquired by his own ingenuity and induſtry; he prides himſelf on his ſagacity, and hopes by its aſſiſtance to be ſtill richer in wiſdom; and he feels ſo much pleaſure in the purſuit of more knowledge, and takes ſo much joy upon every trifling diſcovery which adds to his ſtore, that he cannot think with patience on the evidence which his increaſe in knowledge gives of his real ignorance and

and weakneſs, nor on the infinite perfection and goodneſs of the Deity, which that knowledge demonſtrates. Such reflexions would ſhock his vanity; would convince him he had paſſed his life unprofitably; and might determine him to quit his beloved courſe of philoſophizing, or other courſes ſtill more fooliſh; or elſe to perſiſt in them, under a load of anxious doubts which might pall the taſte of his enjoyments.

He muſt be a ſtranger to the exerciſe of the rational faculty, who does not know, that the purſuit of *knowledge* in any ſcience is attended with very ſenſible pleaſure: or who doubts, that a philoſopher, if bleſſed with health, and means, and temperance, may reaſonably propoſe to drive on in the career of life till nature decay, with as much ſatisfaction as any man who does not confidently look for a happy *hereafter*. And as this is the caſe, ſuppoſing a philoſopher engaged in this pleaſurable courſe, it is not to be imagined, that he would quit it willingly, or liſten,

liſten, without ſome reluctance, to doctrines that ſhould make him uneaſy in it. With ſuch prejudice does almoſt every philoſopher of our days attend to what he daily hears preached, and what the voice of all nature proclaims, of the duties which men owe to their Creator, of the regard which he expects from them to his will, and of the certainty of rewards and puniſhments; and is therefore fertile in objections, to prevent his own and other people's believing theſe truths.

And what puts our age in a much more lamentable caſe than thoſe that were before it is, that whereas the number of philoſophers formerly was but very ſmall, the number of pretended philoſophers is now immenſely great; and whereas books and learning were then in a few hands, at preſent almoſt every body can read. The preſs circulates books very cheap; philoſophers from opinion, and wits for bread, publiſh Atheiſm; and the half-learned and vitious read. With theſe the authority of the learned, as well as the objections

objections againſt doctrines which mens vices may induce them to wiſh not to be true, go far; and thoſe of inferior learning or rank are glad to follow the opinions, as well as the vices of their betters: ſo that a man that truly fears God, is at this day almoſt as great a curioſity as an Atheiſt was heretofore.

What makes the truth of thoſe reflexions the more ſenſible, is, that though thoſe philoſophers called *Freethinkers* controvert the duties owing to the Deity, and dream of no puniſhment attendant on the neglect; yet they all pretend to be, and generally are ſenſible of the ſocial duties, and act up to them better than others do who in other reſpects think more juſtly than they. And this comes from the moral ſenſe in them; which they rather encourage than ſtifle on that article, from the vanity of having the good opinion and approbation of mankind, which they court; and from this conſideration, that it is no obſtruction to their purſuits. Whereas, brought up with doubts of the very exiſt-

ence of the Deity; ripening into years, under a total neglect of all duties that may be owing to him; immerged in purſuits and courſes whereof the objects are pretty much incompatible with thoſe duties; and conſcious, that ſuch duties neglected, if there is any real obligation to them, muſt be highly offenſive to the Deity, and attended with certain puniſhment; it is natural for them to wiſh they may have made no miſtake in that article, and that they may not be found debtors to the divine juſtice. And it imports them very much, in reſpect to the future quiet and tranquillity of their lives, if they reſolve to purſue the pleaſures wherein they are engaged, to convince themſelves, if they can, that all apprehenſions of danger from neglect of duties to the Deity are but vain terrors, the device of prieſts, or the dreams of melancholy men.

But if there be ſuch a thing as an intelligent Being, that has employed and diſplayed infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, in the creation of this univerſe; that has

has with ſtupendous artifice ſtored this globe with every thing neceſſary, not only for the ſupport, but for the felicity of man; that on all his works has ſtamped characters of the infinite perfections and overflowing goodneſs of the Author; that has given to man, and to him alone of all the viſible creation, that ſhare of his goodneſs, eyes to be entertained with the magnificence, the beauty, the harmony, and the order of the univerſe; to ſee the perfection of the Creator in his works; and to diſcover the infinite obligations he lies under to, and the dependence he has on the goodneſs of his beneficent Maker; that has ſo moulded his heart and ſpirit, as to make pleaſure attendant on admiration, and love and gratitude the neceſſary companions of the ſenſe of favours received; and that has joined to the idea of ingratitude, the ſenſation of horror; and to conſciouſneſs of gratitude, an inward ſatisfaction, that even adds to the reliſh of the favour received: what could have been the view of the Creator in beſtowing thoſe eyes, and that diſpoſition of heart and

ſpirit? Was he or was he not to be diſcovered, admired, adored, loved, and reverenced; or was it indifferent to that perfect and beneficent Being, which way his creature employed his eyes, or diſpoſed of his heart? And, on the other hand, how groſs muſt be the folly and guilt of man, who, miſemploying his eyes, and miſapplying his heart, has refuſed to ſee the perfection of God in his works; and, in place of acknowledging with gratitude his obligation and dependence, chuſes to be indebted to nothing but what he calls *Nature* and *Chance*, ſubſtituted by him in the room of God; and beſtows his heart upon vanity, upon the creature in place of the Creator?

If neglects and breaches of the ſocial and moral duties are criminal even in the eyes of Freethinkers, what muſt be the guilt of neglecting the only duty, properly ſpeaking, to God, of denying him the only return which he expects, becauſe it is the only return he has qualified us to make, reverence, love, and gratitude? Ingratitude

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to men is marked with the blackeſt ſtain; what muſt then that vice be when it has for its object the ſource of all goodneſs? and what chance is there that it ſhall paſs unpuniſhed? It is aſtoniſhing, that men who juſtly look with ſuch horror and deteſtation on murder and parricide, ſhould think ſo coolly on the abnegation of the Deity; which denying him his tribute of reverence and gratitude is. But the inſtances of puniſhment which the magiſtrate, for the preſervation of the ſociety, inflicts, helps to keep up the idea of horror that attends the firſt; and the forbearance of vengeance in the latter, is by weak pretenders to Reaſon made an argument to conclude, that no offence is given.

It is a ſtrange imagination, to admit, that men are formed with ideas of right and wrong, with a ſenſe of duty and the contrary, and with full phyſical liberty to act as they ſhall beſt like; and yet to maintain, that it is abſolutely indifferent to the Deity, who gave them that rule of conduct, whether they conform to or tranſgreſs it, whether

whether they do right or wrong; and, conſequently, that it is indifferent to them, if they eſcape puniſhment from their fellow-creatures, whether they have or have not conformed themſelves to the rule of their Creator and Sovereign Lord.

The excellency of the body, the capacity of the underſtanding, the extent of the knowledge of the moſt perfect of the human ſpecies, cannot poſſibly make any impreſſion on the Deity, other than the general complacency that reſults from the ſurvey of his works, and ſeeing that they are good. What a poor figure muſt the parts, the ſagacity, and the knowledge of the admired Sir *Iſaac Newton* make in the eye of the Omniſcient? And how few *Newtons* can mankind boaſt of? Theſe are therefore not the qualities that claim the Deity's regard. But if a rational creature, however limited in underſtanding, or imperfect in body, ſhall have his heart and ſpirit right diſpoſed; ſhall ſee, and, in all his thoughts and actions, acknowledge his dependence on the God that made him;

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ſhall maintain in his heart a grateful ſenſe of the numberleſs obligations he lies under to that bountiful Being, and ſhall be thoroughly diſpoſed to make the *Will* of that Being the rule of his actions during the whole courſe of his life; regardleſs of the pleaſures and ſenſual enjoyment which following this rule may deprive him of, and of the dangers and inconveniences to which purſuing it may expoſe him; in full confidence, that the ſincerity of his heart will be acceptable to, and rewarded by the Creator, who endued it with ſuch diſpoſitions: we muſt neceſſarily conclude, either that the Omniſcient does not know the diſpoſitions and inward actings of the ſpirits of all his creatures, or that the grateful and dutiful heart of ſuch a creature is pleaſing and agreeable to him.

Thus the objects of the complacence of the Almighty amongſt the children of men, may be as numerous as the individuals of the ſpecies. He has given to very few, thoſe diſtinguiſhing parts that provoke the eſteem even of their fellow-creatures; but he

he has given to all, hearts ſuſceptible of reverence, gratitude, and love; and they have no more to do, but to employ thoſe diſpoſitions towards the proper object, to intitle themſelves to the continuation of his goodneſs and good-will for them. It is remarkable, that the only thing which God claims of man in ſcripture is the *heart*; and it is remarkable alſo, that poſſeſſion of the heart of any of our own, or even of the brute ſpecies, is what ſecures our affection in return. Perſuaſion of the friendſhip or love of any of our fellow-creatures, determines us to ſentiments of the like kind for them; and we cannot help, when a dog, a cat, or any other familiar creature ſhews marks of any particular reſpect or fondneſs for us, to have pleaſure in that fondneſs, and to cheriſh the creature in return. Now, though to limit the ſovereign and ſelf-exiſtent Mind, by ſuppoſing that it has juſt ſuch qualities and modifications as ours, would be raſh; yet it would be raſh alſo to aſſert, that there are not in it qualities and diſpoſitions ſimilar to ſuch as are praiſe-worthy and commendable

mendable in our own. Nay, the contrary must be admitted by all who believe the scriptures; which assure, that God made man after his own image, and in every page declare his dislike of sin, and regard for piety.

But here lies the misfortune: This claim of the Creator to the hearts of his creatures cannot be complied with; because they have already disposed of their hearts in another way. Lusts and follies of very different kinds have got possession of their spirits, and the gratification of those is the object of their pursuit. Multitudes follow the direction of the temperature of their body, and are slaves to the appetites that prevail in them; which chain them to the oar they tug at; by the immediate pleasure they taste in obeying the call of those appetites; whilst the very enjoyment of what they are so fond of, destroys the appetite, pulls on diseases and peevishness, with early old age and decay; which must be attended with remorse and horror, if they do not carefully lock out

from their thoughts all ideas of futurity, and of what ought to have been the object of their purſuits. To talk to ſuch men of duty, whether in the career of their enjoyments, or when they are no longer capable of enjoying what their ſoul took delight in, is to preach to the deaf, at leaſt to ſuch as will undoubtedly ſtop their ears againſt ſounds that muſt be ſo grating and diſagreeable.

And, on the other hand, great numbers, who, from their conſtitution, education, or other circumſtances, have eſcaped the inchantments of ſenſual pleaſures, and have reliſhed the delight that attends the exerciſe of their mental faculties, by much the moſt ſubſtantial, manly, and laſting enjoyment of the two, ſee, with regret and contempt, the brutiſh folly in which their fellow-creatures are engaged. They pity and deſpiſe thoſe groveling mean ſouls, who never once taſted the refined ſatisfaction that reſults from employing the rational powers in the acquiſition of knowledge, and the diſcovery of truth. And by how

how much ſoever the ſoul exceeds in excellency the body, by ſo much they look upon themſelves to be better and happier than their brethren. In this they glory, in this they are really happy. In their own opinion they are wiſe, and they hope they are ſo in the opinion of all others. On the vanity that reſults from ſuch an empty conceit they feed. They are glad to be thought wiſer and better than they truly are. To gain the eſtimation of their acquaintance, they are charlatans in ſcience, and hypocrites in conduct. The natural deſire of approbation, born with them, they have transferred from God to their fellow-creatures. The applauſe of men, deſerved or undeſerved, blows up their pride. On that, and on their imagined knowledge, they value themſelves; and can have no idea of any ſtate for which they would exchange their own, except one in which they might be more knowing or more eſteemed.

In the whole courſe of the lives of ſuch men, the true direction of the *heart* was

never once minded. Senſual enjoyment it might not have for its object, but it had the Creator leſs; and knowledge, with the reputation of knowledge, it ardently breathed after and exulted in. To bring ſuch men to a fixed belief, that the boaſted acquiſition of their lives was no more than vanity, and vexation of ſpirit; that death muſt deliver them over to judgment, for the abuſe of thoſe noble talents which their Maker had beſtowed on them; and that there is no way to eſcape puniſhment, but by baniſhing thoſe vanities from their heart, and yielding it entirely to the God that framed it, would be no eaſy ſpot of work; every power of their mind would be employed in defence of the idol they had carved for themſelves. If religion had preſcribed only prayers, penances, building of churches, or any other tranſient act, its language might have been liſtened to: but, as it will be ſatisfied with nothing leſs than the *heart*, which is already beſtowed, no wonder philoſophers are deaf.

To reſiſt the evidence that pours in upon them, from nature, from revelation, from all quarters, in behalf of religion; and to ſtifle the apprehenſions which it muſt naturally beget, they call in to their aſſiſtance that boaſted Reaſon, which qualifies them to judge of God, and of all his works and ways. Him and them they try by that infallible touchſtone; and if ought is propoſed to be believed of either, which they cannot diſtinctly comprehend the manner or cauſe of, the propoſition is immediately rejected, as abſurd and impoſſible; or if any difficulty or objection occur to their imagination which cannot inſtantly be diſſolved, the validity of the objection is ſtraightway allowed, and the propoſition to which it relates, is condemned. But this is not all. If the propoſition condemned has revelation for its ſupport, the whole of revelation, together with the evidence for it, are damned by the lump; becauſe that cannot be the declaration of God, but muſt be a palpable forgery, which aſſerts any falſhood, or, what is juſt the ſame, any thing that does not

not fall in with the notions of the learned and the wise.

Thus, because Freethinkers cannot conceive how a spirit can exist without a body, or how a body dissolved into dust, and dissipated, can be resuscitated, they doubt of a future state, and deny the resurrection; though these very wise men must admit, they have no adequate conception of the soul, or of its *manner* of existence or acting, or of the way in which it and the body were brought together.

In like manner, what is called the *hypostatical union* in Christ, is rejected, because the *manner* of it cannot be comprehended by men; who must admit the union between soul and body in man, and must at the same time confess, they neither do, nor can, whilst they remain in their present condition, conceive how the one operates on the other.

The doctrine of the Trinity shares the same fate; and with some more shew of reason,

reaſon; as, beſides the difficulty of comprehending the *how* and the *wherefore*, in that doctrine, as commonly expreſſed, there is ſome appearance of contradiction in the terms, which makes it difficult to conceive what is meant to be believed. But this appearance of contradiction is owing, not to the revelation from which the knowledge of that hiſtory is derived, but to the vanity and folly of the doctors of the church; who, puffed up, even as the Freethinkers, with too good an opinion of their own parts, would take upon them to define what revelation does not; and to coin terms not made uſe of in ſcripture, to expreſs their imperfect conceptions. The words *Trinity*, and *Perſon*, or *Hypoſtaſis*, are terms not to be met with in the ſacred book: and yet to thoſe terms, and the application of them, the revolt againſt the doctrine is chiefly owing.

What the ſcripture acquaints us with, is this, and no more: That what it characteriſes the Father, the avenger of wrong,

wrong, and rewarder of right, is GOD; that what it characteriſes the SON, the WORD, the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, ſent for that purpoſe by the Father, is GOD; that the HOLY SPIRIT, the correſpondent with, and Comforter of the ſpirits of men, is GOD; and that nevertheleſs the DEITY, the SELF-EXISTENT BEING, is but ONE. That theſe matters are ſo, the ſcripture expreſsly declares; and the manner in which it expreſſes the laſt propoſition, *Deut.* vi. 4. is worth attending to. Our tranſlators render it, *Hear, O Iſrael, the LORD our GOD is one LORD.* The original ſays *JEHOVAH our Gods is one SELF-EXISTENT BEING;* for ſo the word tranſlated *Lord* ſignifies. Now, what is there in our knowledge, in our conceptions, or in our reaſon, that can qualify us to determine the *modus* of the exiſtence, or of the action of the inviſible Deity? That we have no ſort of idea of the ſubſtance of that ſoul which acts in us, or of the manner of its exiſtence or actions, is an agreed point; what impudence then

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muſt it be in us, to pretend to determine, from our conceptions, or rather inability to conceive, the condition, or manner of exiſtence and acting of the Supreme Being, the leaſt of whoſe works are in very deed beyond our comprehenſion?

THE antients, leſs refined than we, diſputed about the figure and form of the Deity; and, knowing none more perfect or noble, as they apprehended, than that of man, beſtowed upon the Deity a human ſhape and figure. The impropriety of this groſs imagination we ſee; as we perceive, that the ideas of extenſion, ſhape, and figure, are not applicable to ſpirit, according to the idea which we have of it. But though we have not eyes to diſcover the ſubſtance or properties of ſpirit, does it certainly follow, that they have nothing in them analogous to ſhape or figure; no properties by which they can be diſcerned, and diſtinguiſhed the one from the other, by God, or even by other ſpiritual beings, to whom he may have given eyes and underſtanding fit to

perceive what we cannot? And is it not, on the other hand, clear, that there may be ſomewhat analogous to figure, ſome particular *modus* of exiſtence of the Deity, of which our want of ideas will not permit us to form any notion!

Had nature produced to our view ſuch living creatures as wild fiction can preſent to our fancy, compoſed of three or more diſtinct bodies, abſolutely ſeparated from each other, without any bodily connexion, but actuated by one and the ſame principle, moving by one will, acting with one conſent, each affected by the accidents that touch either, the one wounded by the blow that wounds the other, and all dying by the killing of one; we ſhould have had no diſtinct conception of what the ſcripture repreſents concerning the Deity. But then, habituated to the ſight of ſuch an extraordinary creation as has been mentioned, the ſcripture-doctrine would ceaſe to be ſo ſhocking as it is to our wiſe men: and yet, from their knowledge of the machinery of nature, they will hardly take

take upon them to ſay, that the Deity could not have created ſuch an animal as has been feigned.

If this reflexion wants any further illuſtration, let the viſion of *Ezekiel*, chap. i. & x. be conſidered: Four living creatures, which he knew to be the *Cherubim*, actuated by one ſpirit, moving with one conſent whitherſoever they would; attended by as many wheels, moving ſpontaneouſly in the ſame manner, becauſe the *ſpirit* of the *living creature* was in them. This plurality and unity expoſed in viſion to the Prophet's view, muſt have leſſened his difficulty againſt admitting the doctrine which ſo much offends our Freethinkers, becauſe nothing reſembling it has ever offered itſelf to their imagination. It is not neceſſary at preſent to inquire, how far the *Cherubim* was the emblem pitched upon by the Deity to repreſent the divine nature, with man united to what the lion in that hieroglyphical figure denoted. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that if ſuch living creatures

had exiſted in nature, and had been ſeen and known, as the Prophet ſaw living and acting in viſion, the myſtery explod-ed by philoſophers would not have been quite ſo incompatible with common no-tions as they pretend. And therefore it is abſurd for wiſe men, to declare againſt a matter of fact aſſerted by the higheſt au-thority, for no other reaſon, forſooth, but that their obſervation or experience has preſented them with nothing that ſhould furniſh an adequate idea of it.

Upon the ſame ſort of principles, our modern reaſoners reject the doctrine of Chriſt's ſatisfaction. They cannot con-ceive how the puniſhment of one who is innocent, ſhould atone for the guilt of another. This to them appears to be contrary to the eſſential juſtice of the Deity, which ought not to take pleaſure in the ſufferings of the innocent; and productive of no good effect, ſuited to the character which they entertain of that exalted Being.

HERE again the temerity of thoſe preſumptuous men is notorious. That juſtice, according to our notions, will not condemn one for the fault of another, is manifeſt. But if the innocent ſhould conſent to ſuffer for the guilty, where is the violation of juſtice in permitting it? If the innocent again has ſome great and noble end in view by ſubmitting to that ſuffering, fit to recompenſe a thouſandfold the grief borne, where is the injuſtice of permitting him to put himſelf in the place of the guilty? If the innocent perſon is all mercy, all bowels, all compaſſion, and can ſuſtain the puniſhment which the broken-hearted repenting criminal cannot; what is ſhocking in the belief, even according to our common notions, that, to comply with the benignity of his nature, he might ſubmit to bear it? It is true we may not ſee ſo clearly why the divine juſtice ſhould be ſatisfied for the offence of one by the ſufferings of another; and that the light of nature would not have led us to diſcover, that we guilty offenders were to be delivered

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from puniſhment by the ſufferings of another: but is that a reaſon why we ſhould not take God's word for it, if he has been pleaſed to aſſure us that it is ſo? Do we know ſo intimately the nature of his eſſential juſtice, as to be certain that it will not permit him to accept of a vicarious ſatisfaction? Amongſt men, we know, that debt owing by one may be diſcharged by payment made by another; and are we certain, that, in the court of heaven, one man's obligation to juſtice may not be cancelled upon another's voluntary fulfilling of it? He little thinks on the unmeaſurable difference that is between the narrowneſs of the human underſtanding, and the immenſity of the divine, who dares reſt on ſuch concluſions.

Another inſtance of mens making their own confined obſervations and conceptions the meaſure and touchſtone of truth, is, the prevailing opinion that diſcards providence, denies a future ſtate, and conſequently renounces the Deity, at

at leaſt deprives the firſt cauſe of all intelligence.

THIS notable opinion is grafted on obſervation, that the Deity does not interpoſe in any extraordinary manner in the tranſactions of this lower world; that every thing proceeds in it according to the concurrence of natural cauſes; that the ſame events befal the wicked as the virous, with the advantage moſt commonly on the ſide of the vitious; that the ſtrongeſt battalions, conducted by the beſt officers, ſucceed in battle; and that vice and villany is triumphant, when conducted by ſkill, without any appearance on the part of God in providence to prevent the effects of the wickedneſs, or to correct the authors of it: and from theſe obſervations the collection is, that all actions are indifferent, and that a future ſtate is a bugbear.

Now, ſuppoſing theſe obſervations preciſely true, and that there is not the leaſt interpoſition of the Deity in this world, what

what is the neceſſary conſequence? Whether that all actions are indifferent, in flat contradiction to the cleareſt feeling and perception of the ſoul; or that there muſt be a future ſtate, in which the actors muſt ſeverally be diſtinguiſhed by rewards and puniſhments? If there are ſuch things as right and wrong, if the Deity is intelligent, and if juſtice is an attribute of that Being, the laſt muſt neceſſarily be the true concluſion. But as the admitting it might be attended with ſome uneaſy apprehenſions, and might require a change of heart and conduct, the moral ſenſe, the moſt intimate conviction, muſt be ſmothered, and intelligence and juſtice denied to the infinitely perfect Being.

But, after all, on what is this important propoſition, That the Almighty has abſolutely abandoned all ſublunary things to the direction of chance, founded? Why juſt on this, That none of our wiſe men have ſeen any miracles wrought of late times; and they are not diſpoſed to think it poſſible, that any could have been wrought

wrought in the more early; and it is a truth not to be conteſted, that the unjuſt ſucceed in this world, fully as well as the juſt.

But if they were to be aſked, Whether they are certain, that no cauſe has interpoſed in the producing any event but what they have obſerved? and whether they are ſure that there are no ſecret ſprings in providence, unſeen and unthought of by them, to which important events are owing? if they would not be laughed at, they muſt anſwer in the negative; which is enough to deſtroy the certainty of their poſition.

But to examine the thing more carefully, they muſt diſtinguiſh between individuals of the human ſpecies, and ſtates and kingdoms; which by us are conſidered in ſome ſort as individuals; and may be ſo by the Ruler of the univerſe. Though men be not puniſhed or rewarded here, they may meet with what they deſerve hereafter. But if ſtates and kingdoms are not

to meet with any correction in this world, they cannot be conſidered as proper objects of it in another.

Now, it is a certain truth, that all ſtates and kingdoms, in proportion as they grow great, wealthy, and powerful, grow wanton, wicked, and oppreſſive. And the hiſtory of all ages gives evidence of the fatal cataſtrophe of all ſuch ſtates and kingdoms, when the cup of their iniquity was full: nor is it poſſible to ſhew, that any one ſtate or kingdom has been overturned that did not deſerve it at the hand of Providence; however little they may have deſerved it at the hand of the tyrant or oppreſſor who brought their calamity upon them. In this argument it is not neceſſary to ſay, that no unjuſt war ever proſpered. Providence may make uſe of the vitious and wicked diſpoſition of any prince, or of the ruler of any ſtate, to execute juſtice upon a power fated to puniſhment. And the only queſtion which the adverſaries to Providence have to anſwer, is, How they can be ſure, that thoſe deſerved judgments were

were the effect of mere fortuity, without the leaſt intervention on the part of the Lord of the univerſe?

THE courſe of providence with reſpect to individuals of the human ſpecies undergoes a very different conſideration, and ought to be viewed in a light which no Freethinker ever thought of. If by happineſs and proſperity in this world is meant, wealth, and power, and enjoyment of all pleaſures, and ſucceſs in all purſuits; it may be ſafely allowed, that the beſt man is not the happieſt or moſt proſperous: but if by happineſs and proſperity is meant, the full and quiet enjoyment of all the pleaſures that man, conſidered as a rational being, is capable of; and ſucceſs in all the purſuits in which, as a reaſonable creature, he ought to engage; there is no doubt, that the good man will be found to be the moſt compleatly happy; and with that good man as little doubt, that the Maker and Sovereign Lord of man has not abandoned the care of him to blind chance.

The man who, forgetting all regards for the Author of his being and happineſs, centers all his views upon himſelf; who, born with a vigorous body and keen appetites, ſucceeds to, or acquires means to gratify all his brutal deſires, and plunges into the enjoyment of whatever his luſt directs him to, is not, in the eyes even of the moſt freethinking philoſopher, happy. His purſuits, as well as his enjoyments, are mean and beaſtly; ſurfeits and accidental diſeaſes interrupt the courſe of his felicity; age, with its attendant infirmities, diſſolve the charm that bound him; pleaſures of all ſorts loſe their reliſh; and the terrors which death unavoidable muſt bring, are no way to be evited, but by baniſhing all thoughts of death from the mind. Such a man's poſſeſſions and enjoyments cannot denote him happy; nor would a wiſe man pray for theſe bleſſings as the portion with which he was to be contented, unleſs he might obtain this other boon, that he ſhould never decay nor die.

No philoſopher that breathes the air, is ſo ſilly as to maintain, that the objects of the purſuits of the avaritious, or of the ambitious, whether in the political or martial way, are objects fit for the purſuit of a rational creature; or that ſucceſs in thoſe purſuits is fit to denote ſuch a creature happy. And if they will take an impartial view of their own boaſted felicity; if they will draw up a fair account of the ſum of their learning and knowledge, and of the happineſs they have taſted in the acquiſition and enjoyment of thoſe bleſſings; and if they will candidly ſet againſt it the diſcoveries they muſt have made of the ſcantineſs of their knowledge, the weakneſs of their underſtanding, and their neceſſary dependence on ſomewhat not within themſelves for their exiſtence, which they never have thought fit to acknowledge; or, however, adding to thoſe reflexions, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of what may come after: the balance of the account will doubtleſs ſtand on the wrong ſide; and will ſhew, that though they have been more happy,

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or rather leſs miſerable than the profligate of the higher or lower claſs of mankind, yet neither their purſuits nor acquiſitions can give them any title to conſider themſelves, or to be conſidered by others, as really happy.

Now, on the other hand, let the caſe of that man be conſidered, who, delivered from the ſlavery of thoſe vices and follies, and acquainted with the end for which he was created, endeavours with all his powers to anſwer the deſign. Such a one taſtes the ſame pleaſure in all ſenſual enjoyments as the greateſt epicure; and has as quick a reliſh of all mental joys that proceed from the purſuit, or from the diſcovery of truth, as the greateſt philoſopher.

But then he ſees; with the philoſopher, that thoſe ſenſual enjoyments are mean and beaſtly, unworthy of the purſuit of rational creatures; that they are annexed to the performance of the animal functions, to induce men to do acts neceſſary for their own preſervation, and the propagation

gation of the ſpecies; but which they never would think of, but for the appetites implanted in them, and the pleaſure which attends the gratification of the appetites; and that ſatiety and uneaſineſs accompanies the purſuit of thoſe pleaſures any farther than nature requires.

And he ſees, by the exerciſe of his rational powers, what few philoſophers attend to, that the eyes of his mind were given him to diſcover the immenſity, the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of the Creator in his works; to diſcover the overflowing bounty of that perfect Being to him, and his conſtant dependence on the Author and Source of his happineſs; to diſcover the numberleſs obligations he lies under, with reverence and gratitude, to obey and to adore the Sovereign of the univerſe; to diſcover his duty towards his fellow-creatures, as well as towards his Creator; to diſcover, that the favour of the Almighty muſt attend performance of duty, as his diſpleaſure muſt follow the ungrateful breach of it; to diſcover, that the

the favour of God is the only object worthy of the purſuit of the heart of man; and to diſcover; that the beſtowing that heart, and all the deſires of it, on ſenſual brutiſh pleaſures, or any other vanity, to the excluſion of the *Eternal*, is the moſt horrid, as well as the moſt fooliſh crime that can be imagined.

The pleaſures of life are enjoyed by this man with as much, perhaps with more reliſh, than by the libertine. But then they do not pervert the heart. The only motion they are capable of exciting there, is, gratitude and thankfulneſs to the beneficent Donor. The acquiſition of knowledge is taſted by him with as much delight as it is by the philoſopher; though it produces in them very different effects. The one it puffs up with pride and preſumption; the other it fills with humility, and reverence for the Moſt High.

The man who has fixed his heart upon the proper object, does not ceaſe to taſte with pleaſure the common bleſſings of this life;

life; neither does he fail to beſtow the proper induſtry to acquire, and to preſerve them. But then he conſiders them only as ſo many ſugar-plums given by the Creator to make his confinement to his priſon of clay more palatable; which muſt have an end when his enlargement begins. He laments the unhappy condition of thoſe who ſeek after them as their chief good. He would neither acquire nor preſerve them at the expence of doing one ſingle act that might forfeit the favour of his Maker and Benefactor: neither does he repine at the privation of them; knowing, that it could not happen without the will and pleaſure of his Lord and Maſter, the Sovereign of the univerſe, to which his heart and will chearfully ſubmit.

Compare the happineſs of this man with that of the greateſt favourite of fortune, who has ſet his heart on other objects, and who has had the full gratification of all his appetites, ſo far as the courſe of humanity will permit; but who muſt die, and leave thoſe enjoyments, un-

certain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wife and the voluptuous of his rank in the world, all the ſenſual and mental pleaſures in which they delight, without the alloy that muſt torture their minds, when they think of parting with them. But then he has in himſelf a conſtant ſource of unalloyed joy, to which they are utter ſtrangers. The abundant goodneſs of the Giver of all thoſe bleſſings, fills his ſoul with gratitude and thankfulneſs, and diſpoſes him with joy to do what appears to him to be his duty; and conſciouſneſs of that happy diſpoſition produces the moſt firm confidence and reliance on the favour and good-will of his omnipotent Benefactor; from which he is to look hereafter for joys of a different nature from thoſe which in this life he ſlights, when they ſtand in the way of his duty. Every act of duty performed, fills his ſoul with a placid, ſtill ſatisfaction, that is ſenſibly felt, though not eaſily expreſſed. A mouthful of meat beſtowed on a hungry beggar, gives the heart of the donor more real ſatisfaction, than the

the reliſh of the food gives pleaſure to the craving ſtomach, or the moſt delicious dainty gives to the vitiated palates of the voluptuous. And the particular excellency of theſe enjoyments is, that no exceſs can ſurfeit or pall the appetite, no accident can deprive him of them.

To a man poſſeſſed of ſuch an incorruptible ſtock of happineſs, the pleaſures of this life appear but mere baubles; and the privation of them a trifling loſs. Life itſelf he is diſpoſed to reſign with willingneſs, becauſe to him death has no ſting.

If then felicity, even in this life, does not depend upon what are called the gifts of fortune, but on the diſpoſition of ſoul that has been deſcribed, with what countenance can any Freethinker maintain, that in this world there is no interpoſition of the act of the Deity, no ſpecial providence? It may indeed be true, that wealth, and honours, and power do not attend the moſt deſerving; and that halters, and infamy, and want do not lay

hold on the vitious: but will it follow, from our not being able to ſee the hand of Providence in the diſtribution of thoſe periſhing favours on which the real happineſs of man does not depend, that the Framer of the hearts of men has no communication with them, and never interpoſes to determine them to that wherein their chief felicity conſiſts?

The proofs of the goodneſs and juſtice of God, of the duty and dependence of man, of the certainty of rewards and puniſhments, of the deſperate condition of thoſe who, neglecting God and their duty, purſue fading pleaſures and vanity with their whole ſpirit; and of the real and permanent happineſs of ſuch as enjoy all the gifts of God with thankfulneſs, and gratefully make it the buſineſs of their lives to obey his will and to obtain his favour, are ſo conſpicuous, that nothing ſeems to be wanted towards their producing *conviction*, but ſomewhat that ſhall turn their eye, and fix the attention upon them; becauſe, if they are duly conſider-

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ed and attended to, the evidence is irreſiſtible. Now, as that attention may be raiſed by various incidents, ſometimes by ſickneſs and diſtreſſes of different kinds, ſometimes by a happy education, ſometimes by the converſation of pious perſons, and ſometimes by reading and meditation, which a thouſand circumſtances ſeemingly accidental concur to improve; why ſhould we conclude, that all theſe incidents are purely accidental; and that the perſon transformed, by them, from a miſerable brute to a happy man, owes the change to blind chance? Whatever vain reaſoners may imagine or bable, the perſon whoſe eyes are opened by thoſe incidents, acknowledges with gratitude the hand of God in them.

But though Freethinkers might be excuſed for concluding, however raſhly, that Providence does not interpoſe in the government of the external tranſactions of this world, becauſe, after all the obſervations they can make, they have not compleat evidence to the contrary; yet what excuſe

excuſe can they have for pretending to judge, that the merciful and beneficent Spirit of God does not work upon the ſpirits of men? From their proper experience they can draw no obſervation, as they have locked out all regards for the Deity from their heart; and what paſſes in the ſpirits of other men they can have no knowledge of, nor indeed any idea, as they have ſuffered no ſuch tranſactions to take place in their own.

PHILOSOPHERS have talked much of action and reaction in matter, and imagine they underſtand what they ſay; what ſhould hinder them to believe, that there may be ſuch a thing as action and reaction between ſpirits, even between the infinitely perfect Spirit and the ſpirits of finite men? If gratitude obſerved in a dog produces ſome regard and kindneſs in the mind of his maſter, why may not the gratitude, the warmth of the heart of man, work ſome ſimilar effect in the all-ſeeing Mind? and who dare preſume to ſay, that it may not act on, and comfort the ſpirit of

of man in return? If that beneficent and all-powerful Spirit does not ſhew his kindneſs in beſtowing wealth, and power, and fading pleaſures; it is becauſe they are not real goods; becauſe they are not the object of the heart and wiſhes of the party favoured; and becauſe, in place of doing them real good, they might call off the affections from that exerciſe wherein his true felicity conſiſts. And this is ſo true, that croſſes, diſappointments, and diſtreſſes, may juſtly be conſidered as acts of the greateſt kindneſs, when they tend to recal the ſtraying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.

How then dares preſumptuous ſhort-ſighted man deny the interpoſition of Providence, becauſe he does not ſee the ſecret ſpring by which it acts, or know the intentions of the Inſcrutable? Or how can he, becauſe a ſatisfactory reaſon does not appear to him for the long-ſuffering patience and forbearance of the Moſt Merciful, doubt of the exiſtence or juſtice of that Being; deny a future ſtate; or maintain

tain the indifference of all actions, as to right and wrong? But ſuch is the fatal effect of the corruption of man's heart, and of the deflection of it from the true object to vice and vanity.

The extreme folly of modern Free-thinkers is much leſs accountable or excuſable than that of the antients. The antients had no certain lights but thoſe of nature. Thoſe naturally led them to ſee the vanity of the puſuits wherein they were engaged, the depravity of the human nature, and the conſequences which might attend their courſes hereafter. Thoſe were but melancholy reflexions, leading to deſpair, and tending to ſour every enjoyment; as they had no certain intimation, that any method was chalked out by the Deity for the expiation of ſin, and for reſtoring offending man to his favour and protection. And therefore it is not to be wondered at, that they baniſhed from their thoughts ſuch gloomy uncomfortable ſpeculations. But our modern madmen hear every day of mercy and pardon offered

offered by the offended Deity to offending ſinners, if they will receive it thankfully. They are told, that this is the declared will of God, and that there is compleat evidence of its being ſuch; and they ſee, that this is the belief of numbers of the moſt ſagacious and inquiſitive of their fellow-creatures. But all this will not do. Their heart is given to other objects; and they hear, that theſe muſt be diſmiſſed before they can ſhare of the pardon proffered.

To keep however their countenance, and the character of Freethinkers, they muſt aſſign ſome reaſon for their revolting againſt revelation. And this they readily do. They ſay, falſely, that they have carefully examined all the evidence for revelation; and they ſay, honeſtly and truly, that all the evidence which they have conſidered, has not been ſufficient to ſatisfy their objections, and to convince them, that what is called revelation is really ſuch.

That they have carefully examined *all* the evidence, is abſolutely falſe. No man ever did, or can do ſo, without receiving perfect conviction. It is a queſtion, whether any profeſſed Freethinker who has hitherto appeared, had learning or talents ſufficient to examine the evidence. It is certain, that none who have wrote, have diſcovered that they had either.

Men may ſearch for arguments *à priori* for the proof of any propoſition that may reſult from the nature of things known to them. That treachery to our neighbour, and ingratitude to the God that made us, are highly offenſive, and ought to be puniſhed by perfect juſtice, may be demonſtrated *à priori*. But if ſovereign goodneſs and mercy, to deliver repenting men from deſerved puniſhment, has contrived a method of ſalvation by ſending his Son to the world to ſuffer for them; and if, to prevent their deſpair, and to encourage their repentance and amendment, that beneficent Being has been pleaſed

pleaſed to publiſh his pardon, with the conditions of it, to mankind; this muſt be admitted to be a matter of fact not diſcoverable by any inductions *à priori*; becauſe it is in ſome ſort adverſary to our general notions of right and wrong; and therefore, to have any effect on the minds of men, muſt have been publiſhed with ſuch a degree of evidence, as muſt neceſſarily gain full belief; and if it was the intention of the Author of this publication, that it ſhould gain belief in future ages, the evidence muſt be of that nature that is fit to carry conviction to all for whom the publication was intended.

Accordingly this revelation, which was made ſoon after the firſt tranſgreſſion, was renewed from time to time, under circumſtances ſo diſtinguiſhed, as could not poſſibly leave any doubt, that it was the declaration of the Deity. And, by wiſdom and power more than human, ſuch a ſort of evidence has been contrived and preſerved for the authority of that revelation, as far exceeds, in point of certainty,

the proof of any other event that ever happened. That ſuch cities as *Babylon* and *Carthage* exiſted; that *Cæſar* won the battle of *Pharſalia*, and was murdered in the *Roman* ſenate, no one doubts. But if all the documents for the authority of revelation were brought together, the proof in this laſt caſe is by ſo much ſtronger than that in the others, as the belief of it is more intereſting to mankind.

But the different degrees of credit given to the one and to the other, ariſe from the different diſpoſitions of the hearts of men. There is no prejudice in the mind of man againſt admitting the firſt; againſt the laſt there is this violent bias, that if it is admitted, men muſt become in their own eyes miſerable wretches, and muſt diſmiſs thoſe luſts and vanities on which they doated. To prevent this diſgrace and irreparable damage, arms muſt be taken up againſt the evidence that inſults their quiet; any objection, (of which there are, and muſt be multitudes), if it cannot eaſily be anſwered, is a demonſtration

ſtration ſuperior to all the evidence for revelation; and they look into revelation, and to the evidence for it, only to arm themſelves with ſuch objections.

It is indeed no wonder, that men whoſe prejudices ſtand ſo much in the way of believing, do not give themſelves the trouble to ſearch after, and to collect *all* the proofs for revelation. It is a laborious work. All the remains of antient hiſtory, and the compoſures of the learned of thoſe times, muſt be examined; all the rites, opinions, and practices of nations, ſo far as they can be diſcovered, muſt be conſidered; all the monuments of antiquity now extant, muſt be ſurveyed; a reaſonable knowledge of the languages in which revelation is recorded, muſt be attained; and the conſequences that have attended that revelation ſince the advent of Chriſt, muſt be adverted to, before one can ſay that he is poſſeſſed of all the evidence, and before he can form a judgment of many of the objections which Freethinkers move.

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But that none of them who have wrote, have given themſelves this trouble, is plain from their writings; which contain little more than ſmatterings of learning, to which the *Jews* have helped them, and which they ſeem, without due examination, to have taken on truſt.

THOUGH it has pleaſed the merciful wiſdom of God, to ſcatter proofs of his revelation over all the antient nations, and to preſerve documents of them down to our days, for the conviction of obſtinate infidels, and for the confirmation of the faith of the inquiſitive who believe; yet, happily for the bulk of mankind, who have neither time nor talents for ſuch inquiries, revelation is ſo calculated, as to require nothing of man that his conſcious ſoul does not ſee to be his duty; and to promiſe him nothing that does not appear to his moſt inward ſenſe to be the neceſſary conſequence of doing it. By it he is acquainted with his forlorn condition; which he needs do no more to diſcover to be truth, than to turn his eyes inward upon

on himſelf. And a remedy is pointed out adequate to the diſeaſe: which tends to magnify the mercy, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of the Creator; and to tie the creature to him, by ſtill ſtronger bonds of duty and gratitude.

In this ſyſtem there is ſuch harmony between duty and intereſt, and therefore ſuch a propenſity in every ſober-thinking perſon to wiſh it to be true, that, from the declared opinions of others, better qualified to judge of the evidence, and to determine, it gains belief; and that very belief, influencing the practice, brings real tranquillity and happineſs in this life, ſpringing from confidence of the favour of the Almighty; a ſure earneſt of future felicity. But by the debauched and the giddy, who have delivered themſelves over ſoul and body to their luſts, and to their vanity, this aptitude, this harmony is not diſcovered. Their fears make them wiſh it may not be true. Objections are rife in every corner; and if any inquiry is made into the proofs, it is

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with an intent to object, and to find them insufficient.

And one of the main objections is, That there is place for any objection against the certainty of revelation. Why, say those reasoners, if it had been the intention of the Almighty, that what is called the revelation of his will should have been believed by all mankind to be such, he would have accompanied it with such evidence as should have been at first sight superior to all objections, and must have convinced and converted all infidels: but since he has not done so, but, on the contrary, room is left for many objections, the conclusion is just, that this pretended revelation is none of his. And it must be admitted, the inference would be pretty just, on supposal of the proposition, That it was the intention of the Deity to convince and convert all infidels, however wicked and reprobate. For it is not to be controverted, that it was in the power of the Almighty to have accompanied revelation with constant standing miracles,

racles, even as it was in his power to have created man with a ſmaller ſhare of free-will, and, by perpetual interpoſition of his grace, to have prevented his actual defection from his duty. But upon what principle is it ſuppoſed, that God intended, or ought to have intended, to extend his grace alike to all; to the obſtinate and flagitious, as well as to the ſober and the humble ſinner? The diſcretion of men makes a wide difference between thoſe characters; and how can we be ſure, that the judgment of God does not ſo alſo?

The mercy of God has provided an atonement ſufficient to expiate the ſins of all mankind, who will take hold of it. The wiſdom of God has contrived evidence ſufficient to convince all mankind, that ſuch atonement is provided, if they will give themſelves the trouble to examine it. But then it is ſo contrived, as to reach with conviction thoſe only who are diſpoſed to take hold of it; that is, the meek and the humble, who are conſcious of their diſtreſs by nature, and de-

ſirous to be delivered from it. And them it reaches, becauſe they think it worth their while to inquire after, and to examine it; whilſt it does not convince, nor indeed can it poſſibly, the proud and the ſtubborn, who ſlight the atonement provided ſo much, and are ſo thoroughly averſe to comply with the condition upon which it is to be obtained, that without troubling their heads with the evidence, they inſolently reject the mercy of the Moſt High. Who then can find fault with the divine goodneſs on this article? The meek ſurely will not; and the proud, who have themſelves only to blame, ought not.

So the ſum of the wiſe objection is this, That the good and juſt God did not intend, that ſalvation ſhould reach thoſe deſperately wicked ſinners who refuſed to accept of it. But this objection weighs with thoſe who have never turned their thoughts upon the heinouſneſs of their own guilt; and have formed to themſelves notions of the benignity of the Deity, from the falſe notions of generoſity

ſity which they have encouraged in themſelves, laying entirely aſide his juſtice and his purity.

From the ſame ſource ſprings another objection, of equal validity as to revelation, founded on the doctrine of the perpetuity of puniſhment. Here again the incomprehenſible, the infinitely perfect Being, is meaſured by the ſpan of the low, blind, groveling creature that makes the objection; who, becauſe he cannot comprehend why this juſtice is ſuited to the divine nature, concludes at once, that the doctrine is impoſſible, and therefore falſe; and, in conſequence, rejects the revelation which is ſaid to aſſert it, without giving himſelf the trouble to examine the evidence that ſupports that revelation, or to inquire whether the matter that thus ſhocks him, is really revealed. A careful inquiry might poſſibly ſatisfy him, that the perpetuity of puniſhments is not abſolutely affirmed; and that no more is neceſſarily to be inferred from revelation, than that the miſery of the damned is to

endure for ages. But such an inquiry would give him competent satisfaction, that the revelation he wantonly rejects, is in very deed the word of God; and would dispose him to believe whatever it clearly declares concerning the Deity and his ways, without considering how far that might or might not tally with his conceits.

And herein lies the monstrous, the surprising folly of the vain philosopher. Every new observation, every discovery, which his sagacity has been accidentally led to make in nature, and which blows up his pride, becomes to him a fresh proof of his own weakness and short-sightedness, and of the immensity of the Deity, of the perfection of his wisdom, and of the inscrutability of his ways to man in his present condition: and yet, from his narrow notions, he will pretend to decide what God ought, or ought not; what he can, or cannot do.

In the pittance of the material world which falls within his ken, the observations

ons of the infinite wiſdom, contrivance, and power of the Creator, daily grow upon him; new and unaccountable properties in matter, acting by unerring rules, and tending to the perfection of the whole, hourly pour in upon him; the magnet, the microſcope, the teleſcope, the priſm, the air-pump, the crucible, electricity, *&c.* furniſh him with compleat evidence, that he knows nothing of the real nature of *matter*, which he ſees, taſtes, and feels, whereof he is in part compoſed, and in which he is at preſent immerſed; and give him undoubted reaſons to conclude, that there may be, or rather that there are numberleſs other properties in matter, and rules of acting which it ſteadily purſues, of which he at preſent has no knowledge, and poſſibly, ſo long as he is confinded to clay, never can.

By what means then is he to judge of the ſpiritual world, of which he neither has, nor can have any adequate idea? A ſpirit acting in himſelf he feels, and is conſcious of its actings; but what it is compoſed

compoſed of, or how it acts, is all hidden from him. That there may be as many different claſſes of *ſpirits*, as there are tribes of animals or plants, he dare not deny; though he can have no conception of the manner of their difference, or of the uſes for which they may be in the creation. That the Creator is ſpiritual, he collects with certainty from the aſtoniſhing wiſdom and artifice of ſo much of the univerſe as is diſcloſed to him; that he is good and bountiful in a ſovereign degree, his works declare; and that he is poſſeſſed of all poſſible perfections, his ſelf-exiſtence demonſtrates. But whence comes man to take upon him to determine, what perfection in any of his attributes is; that the juſtice of God muſt go thus far, and no farther; that his mercy requires he ſhould, or ſhould not do this or that; or that his goodneſs ought, or ought not to operate on ſuch an occaſion? This, ſure, is the moſt aſtoniſhing preſumption! Suppoſing him to have an adequate idea of juſtice, mercy, and goodneſs, as thoſe muſt be by the

the Deity exerciſed in ſupreme harmony, as well as perfection; how dare he preſume to define, how far the exerciſe of either of them may go? Common ſenſe, and that modeſty which ought to attend conſciouſneſs of our dimneſs of ſight, would direct us, when any thing in the ways or will of God appears that we cannot account for, to receive and acquieſce in it with humble ſubmiſſion, and to believe that it is right and juſt.

Wherefore, when we ſee the whole brute creation, animate as well as inanimate, purſuing conſtantly, and without erring, the intention of God in their formation; and when we obſerve, in that part of the rational creation which is known to us, the higheſt diſorder and confuſion, rebellion againſt God, injuſtice towards men, fraud and falſhood triumphant, virtue and ſincerity deſpiſed and oppreſſed, and guilt contracted that muſt neceſſarily terminate in puniſhment, all the conſequence of the freedom of will in man; let us not conclude, as mad-

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men are apt to do, that all actions are indifferent to the Deity, or that no puniſhment is to attend guilt, upon a ſuppoſal, that it would have been unbecoming the benignity of God, who muſt have foreſeen the conſequence of free-will in man, to have brought into the world ſo many millions of rational creatures, who he foreſaw muſt become the objects of wrath and puniſhment.

NOTHING is more certain, than that free-will has been the cauſe of tranſgreſſion in man; and that the Deity muſt have foreknown the effects it was to produce. But are we ſure, that, in the ſcale of eſſential juſtice, it was not right and juſt, to have created man in a ſtate of happineſs, with a fitneſs and capacity to preſerve that ſtate, and to acquire one higher, and with a power to chuſe between good and evil; with a ſanction, that if he preferred evil to good, he muſt bear the diſmal conſequences of that perverſe choice? Do we perfectly know the nature of the ſovereignty and

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right which the Creator has to diſpoſe of the creatures which he has made? Or are we acquainted with all the motives that induced the Moſt High to create man ſo qualified? Is it certain, that no good effect, worthy the divine goodneſs, to other parts of the unbounded creation, could have flowed from the fate of man? Or is it clear, that we are intitled to judge of the fitneſs or unfitneſs of any part of God's ways or works, without conſidering the relation it has to, and the effect it has on the whole? Until theſe queſtions meet with ſatisfactory anſwers, nothing can be more ſilly than to conclude as Freethinkers do.

A ſober man, on the contrary, who ſees and laments the diſorders of mankind, will not give up the moral ſenſe of his ſoul as to the merit or demerit of human actions; nor will he give up the juſtice or goodneſs of God, becauſe he cannot preciſely aſſign the motive that induced the Deity to endue man with that proportion of free-will with which he is poſ-

ſeſſed. Full conviction of the infinite diſproportion that is between his limited underſtanding, and that of the ſelf-exiſtent Being, leads him to conclude with certainty, that his not being able to comprehend any thing, is not evidence that the Moſt High cannot. He may entertain himſelf profitably, at leaſt pleaſantly, in meditating on ſuch ſubjects: but, though his invention ſhould fail of ſolving the difficulty, he will not on that account deny principles, nor impeach the juſtice or goodneſs of his Maker.

That the end of God in creating man, endued with free-will, and with that proportion of reaſon, and of appetites, wherewith he was poſſeſſed, was not to diſcover to himſelf what uſe man was to make of thoſe talents, muſt be evident to all who admit the omniſcience and preſcience of the Deity. But it is not ſo evident, that one of the motives of the Creator for framing man ſo qualified, may not have been, to render his juſtice and his mercy conſpicuous to mankind; and

and to ſhew thoſe attributes, as well as the effects of free-will left to chuſe between the dictates of Reaſon and the bent of appetites, to other claſſes of rational beings, to us at preſent unknown.

Had all the rational creation unerringly purſued the dictates of Reaſon, that is, had they unerringly done their duty, there would have been no occaſion for diſplaying the juſtice or the mercy of God. His immenſity, his eternity, his aſtoniſhing power, goodneſs, and wiſdom, were legible in his works; and it ſeems unreaſonable to doubt, that one of the ends of the creation was, to exhibit to rational creatures compleat evidence of thoſe glorious attributes and qualities. But unleſs ſome rational creature had offended, there could have been no example of juſtice, nor any object for mercy.

Before any treſpaſs committed, every rational being that ſuppoſed revolting againſt ſovereign goodneſs poſſible, muſt have concluded, that the guilty deſer-

ved to be, and would be purſued by the vengeance of the Omnipotent. But in what manner juſtice required that this vengeance ſhould be exerted, it could have no comprehenſion of; far leſs could it have any conception, that eſſential juſtice ungratefully affronted, ſhould ſuffer thoughts of mercy to interpoſe in behalf of the inſolent offender, and ſhould deviſe a method, conſiſtent with juſtice, to deliver the criminal from puniſhment, and reſtore him to his priſtine favour.

But the abuſe of free-will has given occaſion to the manifeſtation of thoſe divine qualities, which otherwiſe might have remained unknown to men and angels, in a light ſo diſtinguiſhed, as muſt needs produce admiration, with praiſe and adoration, and give a more noble and intereſting idea of the perfection of the Deity.

We know but too well, that man has fallen; and the ſcripture acquaints us with the revolt of ſome of the angels. Their crime,

crime, we are told, met with inſtant condemnation and puniſhment, but man's with a very different uſage. The convicted and aſhamed offender had hopes of mercy immediately given him. Infinite wiſdom found means to ſatisfy eſſential juſtice, and to make way for the diſplay of mercy, that glorious and adorable attribute of the Moſt High.

The cauſe of this diverſity we can but gueſs at. The weakneſs of man, and the temptations he was liable to, we know; but the condition and temptation of the tranſgreſſing angels, we are not acquainted with. If we may however conjecture, their knowledge, capacity, and power was far beyond that of man; and conſequently their defection leſs excuſable: and accordingly we find their condemnation was by ſo much the more prompt and ſevere. Whereas with reſpect to man, the execution of the ſentence againſt him was ſuſpended; mercy was offered; a method of reconciliation with the Deity was ſet on foot; repeated intimations were made

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by the clement Deity of this purpoſe of grace; repeated and renewed inſtitutions were backed by divine authority, to recal men to their duty; the ſovereign and eſſentially juſt Lord of the univerſe was pleaſed to proclaim himſelf merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and patient; and, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, that declaration has by experience been found to be ſtrictly true. His long-ſuffering, accompanied with continual invitations to accept of pardon, endures to this moment, to the inexpreſſible joy of thoſe that love and fear him; though it muſt at leaſt turn to the utter confuſion of thoſe who heedleſsly or wilfully reject the proffered grace.

In the treatment of the fallen angels, for whom we know no ſhadow of excuſe, nothing but ſtrict juſtice appears. In the treatment of man, the ſeverity of the juſtice of the Eternal is made conſpicuous, chiefly by the atonement which his mercy has provided to expiate the guilt, and avoid the puniſhment of unhappy creatures. But that boundleſs pity and compaſſion,

paſſion, that eſſential mercy, and that unwearied patience, which has been, and ſtill is exerciſed towards ungrateful man, could never have appeared to men and angels, if the abuſe of free-will had not given occaſion for the diſplay of it.

It is idle to inquire, becauſe it ſeems impoſſible to diſcover, what gave occaſion to the revolt of the fallen angels. But it is probable, their ſudden and ſevere puniſhment has prevented treſpaſſes of the like nature. That exertion of the juſtice and power of the Eternal muſt have made a deep impreſſion upon all ſpirits of the angelick order. And if the rectitude of the remaining choir is owing to the puniſhment of the rebellious crew, who will preſume to find fault with God, for giving angels ſuch a portion of free-will as to leave them fallible, or for reſorting to rigid juſtice for the puniſhment of their offence?

Had man, upon his firſt offence, been treated as he deſerved; had threatened death

death immediately followed his crime, there would have been an end of the ſpecies: but there would have been no inſtance of the mercy, the tender-heartedneſs, the long-ſuffering of the Sovereign Being; none to ſing his praiſes, or to bleſs him, on account of that divine attribute. As his perfect wiſdom and exuberant grace has contrived it, millions of the human race who have taſted of his goodneſs in this reſpect, feaſt their ſouls on the contemplation of his amazing condeſcendence, and with their whole ſpirit adore and bleſs him.

And if it cannot be doubted, that the end of the formation of myriads of various plants, and other inanimate productions, is, to give to intelligent minds ſome ſort of idea of the wiſdom, the power, and the goodneſs of the Creator; why will conceited men quarrel with the divine œconomy regarding the human race? ſince without that part of it to which they object, there could have been no tolerable idea of the mercy or the long-ſuffering of the

the Deity, nor any heart to rejoice, or tongue to bleſs him, on that account.

But this reflexion goes ſtill farther. We have heard of other rational creatures, beſides ourſelves, under the appellation of *angels*; ſome of whom fell, as we have done: and we know not whether any, or what diverſity there may be of kinds amongſt them. This much however may be concluded, that we cannot with any certainty determine, that there may not be between the ſupreme Being and us a vaſt variety of rational beings diſtinct from the human ſpecies, and differing from it as to the extent of underſtanding, affections, and inclinations; and conſidering the immenſity of the univerſe, the high probability is, that ſuch beings there are.

Now, if it may be further ſuppoſed, that thoſe rational beings have any cogniſance of what happens amongſt the children of men, why may we not alſo ſuppoſe, that their information on this grand

article was one of the ends in view with the Creator, when man was framed with that capacity to err that brought on the fall?

That angels, who are believed to have been formed very pure and perfect, were poſſeſſed of free-will, is plain; becauſe they made a bad uſe of it, and fell. And if there are various claſſes of angels, and different ſpecies of ſpiritual or rational beings between the higheſt order of angels and us, their actions muſt, at leaſt, according to our conception of the actions of rational beings, may be determined by choice. And it is impoſſible for us to ſay, what diverſity there may be in the underſtandings and capacities of thoſe different ranks of creatures; what propenſities or inducements to perſevere in purſuing their duty, or what diſpoſitions or temptations to err.

Now, who can tell how many myriads of thoſe creatures may owe the ſtate of felicity they now enjoy, to the correction

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of the lapſed angels, and to the ſcene of miſery and folly which the conduct of the vain conceited part of mankind has, almoſt ſince the creation of this ſyſtem, preſented them with?

If a philoſoper views with juſt contempt the ſcandalous ſprings from which the actions of the vitious proceed, what muſt be the ſenſe of intelligent beings of a ſuperior order? How fooliſh, as well as odious muſt the notions of wicked men be in their eyes? And how noble and magnificent muſt their idea be of the mercy and long-ſuffering of the Eternal, who, for ſo great a ſeries of ages, has been following ſuch wretches with perpetual offers of forgiveneſs and felicity? If in ſuch minds there are any appetites or impulſions ſimilar to thoſe that lead the vain and the wicked of the human race aſtray, how careful muſt they be to reſtrain ſuch deſires; and how thankful to their Maker, for the admonition that has put them on their guard? * * * * *

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